

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

NAG

PC

PLA

WII

PREVIEWS

Splinter Cell: Conviction

Battlefield: Bad Company 2

R.U.S.E. | Aliens vs. Predator

BioShock 2 | Crackdown 2

SPEC OPS® THE LINE

Dirt!

We dig deep into the sandbox
and unearth Spec Ops: The
Line and Prince of Persia:
The Forgotten Sands

REVIEWS

The Saboteur | Tropico 3

Bayonetta | Rogue Warrior

James Cameron's Avatar: The
Game | Saw | + More!

HARDWARE

SCIENCE OF SPEED:

Do solid-state drives actually
help your PC's gaming and
day-to-day performance?



vol 12 issue 11 02.2010 SOUTH AFRICA R42.00



Riddle me this: first there was one, soon there might be two, but now you have none (in future, check the bag before you leave the shop).

WE WILL REBORN



© 2002-2010 Take-Two Interactive Software and its subsidiaries. Developed by 2K Marin, 2K Australia, 2K China and Digital Extremes. BioShock, 2K Games, 2K Marin, 2K Australia, 2K China, the 2K Games logo, the 2K Marin logo, the 2K Australia logo, the 2K China logo and Take-Two Interactive Software are all trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Digital Extremes and its logo are trademarks of Digital Extremes. Microsoft, Windows, the Windows Vista Start button, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies, and "Games for Windows" and the Windows Vista Start button logo are used under license from Microsoft. "PlayStation", "PLAYSTATION" and "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other marks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved.



BIOSHOCK 2

12th February 2010
www.bioshock2game.com

Get the Best of the Best sellers

loads more titles available

PC DVD-ROM	SUPER HITS	Brothers in Arms Road to Hill 30
PC DVD-ROM	SUPER HITS	CSI 2 Dark Motives
PC DVD-ROM	SUPER HITS	Prince of Persia
PC DVD-ROM	SUPER HITS	Far Cry
PC DVD-ROM	SUPER HITS	Doom 3
PC DVD-ROM	SUPER HITS	The Movies
PC DVD-ROM	SUPER HITS	TMNT Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
PC DVD-ROM	SUPER HITS	The Settlers Heritage of Kings



Assorted Super Hits Games

- Brothers in Arms Road to Hill 30 (63573)
- CSI 2 Dark Motives (65191)
- Prince of Persia Two Thrones (68205)
- Splinter Cell Chaos Theory (68206)
- Brothers in Arms Earned in Blood (70443)
- CSI 3 Dimensions of Murder (70444)
- Far Cry (70445)
- Rainbow Six Vegas (70446)
- Settlers Heritage of Kings Complete Edition (70447)
- Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (70448)
- Resident Evil 4 (70450)
- Doom 3 (70451)
- Quake 4 (70452)
- The Movies (70453)
- Call of Duty Deluxe (70454)
- RollerCoaster Tycoon 3 Deluxe Edition (70456)
- Chris Sawyer's Locomotion (70457)

R59⁹⁵ each

Assorted Classic PC Games

PC DVD ROM	EA CLASSICS	Lord of The Rings Conquest
PC DVD ROM	EA CLASSICS	Mass Effect
PC DVD ROM	EA CLASSICS	Littlest Pet Shop
PC DVD ROM	EA CLASSICS	Battlefield 2142 Deluxe



R149⁹⁵ each

► Lord of The Rings Conquest (70713) ► Mirror's Edge (70712) ► Mass Effect (70711) ► Littlest Pet Shop (70710) ► Dead Space (70709) ► Crysis Warhead (70708) ► Command and Conquer Tiberium Wars Deluxe (70707) ► Burnout Paradise Ultimate (70706) ► Battlefield 2142 Deluxe (70705)

Assorted PS2 Platinum Games



R199⁹⁵ each

► God of War (59759) ► Gran Turismo 4 (59456) ► Jak X (59766) ► Killzone (55614) ► Ratchet and Clank 3 (71843) ► Tekken 5 (59758)

Assorted PS3 Platinum Games



R399⁹⁵ each

► GT5 Prologue (71846) ► Heavenly Sword (71847) ► Uncharted Drake's Fortune (71851) ► Resistance Fall of Man (71850) ► Motor Storm (71849)

Wide range of **console & gaming** accessories available.

Visit **www.incredible.co.za** for details of your nearest store.

Incredible Call Centre 0860 011 700

Prices include 14% VAT. Prices stated herein are recommended retail and are subject to change. Credit approval is subject to the terms and conditions as stipulated on the application forms. All standard terms and conditions of Incredible Connection & suppliers herein apply. One year warranty on all hardware. E&OE.

Incredible
CONNECTION
Where technology & humanity meet

Inc DTP 3131

February 2010

NAG DVD Contents



Regulars

- 8 Ed's Note
- 10 Inbox
- 12 Bytes
- 53 Looking Back – Kingpin: Life of Crime
- 74 Lifestyle – Comics
- 76 Lifestyle – Figurines
- 98 Game Over

Opinion

- 22 Miktar's Meanderings
- 24 I, Gamer
- 82 Hardwired
- 84 Life, Hardware and Ch@ps

Features

- 26 Spec Ops: The Line
- 34 Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands
- 86 Science of Speed: Storage

Previews

- 38 Splinter Cell: Conviction
- 40 Battlefield: Bad Company 2
- 42 BioShock 2
- 44 Aliens vs. Predator
- 46 Crackdown 2
- 48 R.U.S.E.

Reviews

- 54 Reviews: Introduction
- 56 Bayonetta [360]
- 58 The Saboteur [360]
- 60 Tropico 3 [PC]
- 62 James Cameron's Avatar: The Game [PC]
- 64 Majesty 2 [PC]
- 66 Rogue Warrior [PC]
- 68 Saw [PS3]
- 70 Borderlands: The Zombie Island of Dr Ned [360]
- 70 Borderlands: Mad Moxxi's Underdome Riot [360]
- 72 Supercar Challenge [PS3]
- 72 Tornado Outbreak [PS3]
- 73 Zombie Driver [PC]

Hardware

- 78 Hardware News
- 80 Dream Machine
- 81 Inbox
- 88 GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD7
- 90 HIS Radeon 5850
- 92 SteelSeries iron.lady Siberia Full-Size Headset
- 94 GIGABYTE GA-H55M-UD2H
- 94 Philips 244E LCD Monitor
- 96 Razer Naga
- 96 Vantec NexStar Hard Drive Dock
- 97 ROCCAT Kova Gaming Mouse
- 97 Verbatim 5.1 Channel Gaming Headset

Demos

CSI: Deadly Intent | Dark Salvation | Colin McRae: DiRT 2 | GREED: Black Border | King's Bounty: Armored Princess | PT Boats: Knights of the Sea

Drivers

ATI Catalyst Drivers 9.12 Vista & XP | NVIDIA ForceWare 195.62 WHQL Vista & XP

Extras

CheatBook Database 2009 + Updates [January 2010] | Dante's Inferno Comic Book Issue #1
Dragon Age: Origins Toolset 1.00 | Drive December 2009 PDF | NAG wallpapers

Patches

James Cameron's Avatar: The Game - Patch v1.01 | Dragon Age: Origins - Patch v1.01b | Dragon Age: Origins - Patch v1.02 | Need for Speed: Shift - Patch v1.2 EU DLC

Game Trailers

0 day Attack on Earth - City Defence Trailer | Aliens vs. Predator - Weyland-Yutani Trailer | Battle Beat - Launch Trailer | Battlefield: Bad Company 2 - Battlefield Moments Episode III | Battlefield: Bad Company 2 - Squad-Based Multiplayer Interview | Bayonetta - Combat Montage | Bayonetta - Platform and Puzzle Montage | BioShock 2 - Civil War Multiplayer Trailer | BioShock 2 - Turf Wars Multiplayer Trailer | Blood Bowl - Kickoff Teaser Trailer | Borderlands: Mad Moxxi's Underdome Riot - Opening Cinematic | Borderlands: Mad Moxxi's Underdome Riot teaser | Brink - Airport Walkthrough | Brink - Container City Trailer Part 1 | Brink - Container City Trailer Part 2 | Brink - Container City Trailer Part 3 | Command & Conquer 4: Tiberian Twilight - Tiberium Developer Diary | Dante's Inferno - Christmas Carol Trailer | Demon's Souls - Tendency Walkthrough | Final Fantasy XIII - Japanese Ambush Battle Trailer | Final Fantasy XIII - Japanese Sanctum Battle Trailer | Final Fantasy XIII - Japanese Summoning Odin Trailer | Final Fantasy XIII - Japanese Sunset Cinematic | Final Fantasy XIII - Japanese Wasteland Battle Trailer | Fist of the North Star Warriors - Japanese Epic Battles Trailer | Fist of the North Star Warriors - Japanese Rumble Trailer | GREED: Black Border - Evil in the Darkness Trailer | The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks - Villages Montage | Mass Effect 2 - Assassin Trailer | Mass Effect 2 - Cinematic Trailer | Mass Effect 2 - Infiltrator Class Walkthrough | Mass Effect 2 - Savage Trailer | Mega Man 10 - Japanese Debut Trailer | R.U.S.E. - Cinematic In-Game Trailer | R.U.S.E. - Death From Above Strategy Walkthrough | Record of Agarest War - US Debut Trailer | Resonance of Fate - Demo Boss Battle Trailer | Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Conviction - Collector's Edition Trailer | Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Conviction - Cooperative Trailer | Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Conviction - Cooperative Walkthrough | Split Second - Strategy Walkthrough | Star Trek Online - Fleet Actions Developer Diary | Star Trek Online - Leonard Nimoy Behind the Scenes Featurette | Star Trek Online - Zachary Quinto Behind the Scenes Featurette | Toy Soldiers - Multiplayer Trailer | Toy Soldiers - Single-Player Trailer | Wings of Prey - Launch Trailer | Zombie Driver - Launch Trailer

www.gametrailers.com Game of the Year Awards 2009

Best Action-Adventure Game | Best Downloadable Game | Best Expansion or DLC | Best Fighting Game | Best First-Person Shooter | Best Graphics | Best Multiplayer | Best Music | Best Rhythm Game | Best New IP | Best Nintendo DS Game | Best PC Game | Best PS3 Game | Best PSP Game | Best Puzzle Parlor Game | Best Racing Game | Best Role-Playing Game | Best Single-Player Campaign | Best Software Line-up | Best Sports Game | Best Story | Best Strategy Game | Best Third-Person Shooter | Best Trailer | Best Wii Game | Best Xbox 360 Game | Biggest News Story | Biggest Surprise | Game Of The Year | Most Disappointing Game | Most Innovative Game

ScrewAttack Video Game Vault

Captain Commando | Chuck Rock | Cobra Triangle | Daze Before Christmas | Die Hard Arcade | Hook | Iggy's Reckin' Balls | Jackie Chan's Action Kung Fu | Judge Dredd

Spike TV Video Game Awards 2009 - Game Announcements

Batman: Arkham Asylum 2 - Debut Trailer | Crackdown 2 - Debut Trailer | Deadliest Warrior: The Videogame - Debut Trailer | Green Day: Rock Band - Debut Trailer | Halo Reach - In-Engine Debut Trailer | Medal of Honor - Debut Trailer | Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands - Debut Trailer | Spec Ops: The Line - Debut Trailer | Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II - Debut Trailer | Tron Evolution - Debut Trailer | True Crime - Debut Trailer | UFC 2010 | Undisputed - Debut Trailer

WIN a trip to GamesCom 2010 in Germany with FNB Connect!

Includes R10 000 spending money & there are great monthly prizes up for grabs. To enter surf the net with FNB Connect Surf.

Surf | Talk | Play



Visit www.fnbconnect.co.za for more
*Terms and Conditions apply.



Data Competition Monthly Prize Winners
Derek Shardlow, Eliza Martins, Jonathan Wright & Philip Parker - each winning 1 of 4 Darksiders: Wrath of War + limited edition merchandise, on PlayStation 3 or Xbox360. Sponsored by Ster Kinekor Entertainment.

*PS3 and "PLAYSTATION" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All content, game titles, trade names and/or trade dress, trademarks, artwork and associated imagery are trademarks and/or copyright material of their respective owners. All rights reserved.

PS3
PlayStation 3

Voted the top retail bank in the Sunday Times Top Brands Survey 2009

First National Bank - a division of FirstRand Bank Limited.
An Authorised Financial Services and Credit Provider (NCRCP20).



FNB
First National Bank

How can we help you?



Things are different... but the same

MUCH LIKE *MODERN WARFARE* without the dedicated servers and *Command & Conquer* without the harvesting, NAG is now without a spine. But to explain the spine we need to start in the middle of the beginning of the beginning at the end – you know, like *Star Wars*.

Towards the end of 2009, I was fed up with all the limitations we faced each month with NAG... can't print more than 100 pages, can't increase the circulation anymore, can't have all these cool demos on the DVD and so on and so forth.

The plan was to drastically change things and force the issue with the printers until I was happy with the price and then work everything back from there. This process was to strip the faulty 'appliance', clean everything out, rethink it all and then put it back together how we've always wanted it. The printing of NAG was the first issue to get resolved, now the extra DVD (see below), then the redesign and then the increased circulation and possible increase in page count. There is a carefully designed plan at work here and the important thing to remember is that I have the best interests of the magazine in mind.

You see, the problem with NAG as a business is that we grew organically and without thinking much about the future – my fault (too busy playing games to be honest). :) The main reason we were able to just carry on and have fun was the 'cheap' printing we enjoyed at our original printer. They went under and since then, we've been fighting to get

the printing price down so we can carry on having fun. We've managed to do this now, but of course, there has been a price to pay – no spine and different paper. This has now allowed us to add a poster in the middle of the magazine and due to popular demand, we've added the spine back to the magazine – it's on page 6. The bottom line here is that we're building a better NAG in 2010 and adding plenty of new media initiatives soon that'll be free to our readers. It's going to be a wild ride and while most companies just say they're revamping and changing and improving, we're taking it very seriously.

NOW THE OTHER IMPORTANT THING...

On pages 32 and 33, you'll find an advert about voting. We're trying to find out if all our readers are prepared to pay an extra R10 for an extra DVD each month. Please consider your vote carefully and then make sure you do it right now – don't wait and then forget. This is critically important as it's a big change and we want to make sure we're doing the right thing. Also, think about the future... When you do vote just remember that if we do go up in price now, when the next jump in storage happens it won't happen with a big price increase... think Blu-ray in a few years' time.

Later people!

Michael James
Editor

Sand... That sh!t gets everywhere

So, *Spec-Ops*, and *Prince of Persia* both have one thing in common – go on guess... that's right, sand. Thanks to Megarom, the universe and gimmicky marketing ideas, we decided to make NAG a reality magazine this month and added a little sand to the magazine bag, so the sand theme is really driven home*.

* We absolve ourselves of any responsibility for any damage caused by the sand. You were warned.

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 friends & enemas

Just to clarify my (our) position when it comes to friend requests through Steam and so on. With our increased online activity (thanks to MW2), we get tons and tons of friend requests. My personal policy is to only accept requests from people I know. It's not because I'm being a dick or anything, it's simply a management thing. Try to imagine getting 20-30 invites to play whenever you play. So, I've had to 'ignore all' to well over a hundred odd requests in the last two months. Really sorry, it's not you, it's me – and I hope you understand why. :))

editor
michael.james
michael.james@tidemedia.co.za

technical writer
neo sibeko

staff writer
alex jelagin

international jet-setters
geoff burrows
dane remendes

contributing editors
lauren das neves
regardt van der berg

copy editor
nati de jager

international correspondents
miktat dracon
alexander gambotto-burke

contributors
clive burmeister
rodain joubert
adam liebman
walt pretorius
miklós szecsei
tarryn van der byl

art director
chris bistline

assistant art director
chris savides

photography
chris bistline
dreamstime.com

sales manager
dave gore
dave.gore@tidemedia.co.za
+27 82 829 1392

sales executive
cheryl bassett
cheryl.bassett@tidemedia.co.za
+27 72 322 9875

marketing and promotions manager
jacqui jacobs
jacqui.jacobs@tidemedia.co.za
+27 82 778 8439

office assistant
paul ndebele

tide media
p o box 237
olivedale
2158
south africa
tel +27 11 704 2679
fax +27 11 704 4120

subscription department
subs@tidemedia.co.za

internet
www.nag.co.za
www.tidemedia.co.za

printing
art printers web division

distribution
jmd distribution



Copyright 2010 Tide Media.
All rights reserved. No article or picture in this magazine may be reproduced, copied or transmitted in any form whatsoever without the express written consent of the Publisher. Opinions expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Publisher or the Editors. All Trademarks and Registered Trademarks are the sole property of their respective owners.

Mmmmm... campers...
They taste like chicken!

NAG REVIEW RIGS SUPPLIED BY:

GIGABYTE
Quality is Everything

Ultra Durable 3
CLASSIC 20Z Copper PCB
50,000 24h lifespan
Dual BIOS

EXTREME X

DYNAMIC ENERGY SAVING



Guaranteed Protection

meets

military grade

drop test standards



StoreJet™ 25 **mobile**

Available in: 160GB / 250GB / 320GB / 500GB

- Hi-Speed USB 2.0 compliant and USB 1.1 backwards compatible
- Easy Plug and Play installation
- Ultra-Portability
- Additional software pack :StoreJet elite (helps you manage your data)
- OneTouch Auto-Backup function
- Powered via the USB port. No external power or battery needed
- LED indicates power on and data access



For more information please visit www.rectron.co.za or call 0860 582 835 / For Support call our National Technical Support Line: 0861 788 789

Johannesburg:
Tel: (011) 203 1000
Fax: (011) 203 1940

Cape Town:
Tel: (021) 555 7136
Fax: (021) 555 7187

Durban:
Tel: (031) 571 8839
Fax: (031) 571 8865

Port Elizabeth:
Tel: (041) 398 7082
Fax: (041) 398 7135

Bloemfontein:
Tel: (051) 430 0000
Fax: (051) 430 1144

Letter of the Moment

From: Noel

Subject: Teaching Old dogs some new... fun.

"IS GAMING MATURING?" I believe so. And when I say maturing I mean evolving and expanding the target audience.

I noticed some adverts being raised for consoles and games that are not in the kids section anymore. I see a lot of advertisements that have quotations, statements and headings like, 'Get Dad something special for Christmas', and the advert would be about a great Xbox bundle. I mean, I would really love it if my Mom bought my Dad the new Assassins Creed or Call of Duty for Christmas, if you catch my drift. I also saw on Father's Day that there were no adverts for electric shavers or car wash kits but adverts about great game prices for this Fathers Day. So what has happened?

A couple of years ago still in the era of PlayStation 1 and Sega you would never find gaming adverts targeting an older genre of people. So clearly over the past few years gaming has matured. I see a lot more parents and people in their late 30s enjoying the thrills of first person shooters and the quests on RPGs than you did those many years ago. I believe this is because of the games and consoles evolving. All the games that are being released now have higher age restrictions than when people were playing Tetris or Pac-Man. These games now have a sense of meaning and purpose to them, which makes it much more attractive to an older audience and much more fun to. I really do enjoy this new "Age" of gaming. Also the fact that when my dad and I want to have some father son time we don't have to go outside and toss the old pig skin but we can stay inside and do that on EA's Madden 10 or for some real bonding we can drive a couple of laps on Forza 3. A funny thing also happened the other day while I was playing an online game of Halo 3, some poor guy just could not get a good shot with that sniper, and over the headset I heard the guys wife shout 'stop shooting like a NOOB' which I found extremely funny. It's pretty obvious that the era of gaming is now upon us where everyone has a part in the gaming world. I enjoy the magazine a lot guys! Keep up the great work! Now I have to help my Dad finish Call of Duty on veteran or I get no lunch LOL."

Thanks for the mail. Actually, the gamers are maturing. Remember, gaming first started getting "mainstream" (depending who you ask) when the original PlayStation was launched in 1995. That was 15 years ago. Many "target-market" gamers were 15 to 20 years old then and are now 30 to 35, which makes them dads, corporate ladder climbers and some of them established business people. Remember, this is a very general statement: there are exceptions, like me - I've been gaming for around 30 years starting with the Atari and 20c arcade machines in the local fish and chips shop. Also, yes; games are maturing too to keep up with the evolving audience. Ed.

megarom
interactive

The 'Letter of the Moment' prize is sponsored by Megarom. The winner receives two games for coming up with the most eclectic chicken scratch.

IMPORTANT STUFF! PAY ATTENTION!

Land Mail: P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158
Cyber mail: letters@tidemedia.co.za
Important: Include your details when mailing us, otherwise how will you ever get your prize if you win...



From: James

Subject: Comment

"I HAVE JUST READ YOUR Ed Note (which you wrote on 02/12/2009 for January 2010 issue), and feel it is important to address what is said here about the expectations from distributors, publishers and advertisers. The consumer relies on fair and accurate reviews on all products and for these people to expect anything less, must certainly raise concerns to the quality of the product and the supplier in general. If they, the distributors, publishers and advertisers spent as much time on making their product a genuine quality product, as much as the time we spend to make the money to purchase them, then surely NAG will indeed provide a fair review. I trust in what is in your magazine and I for one am impressed that this is a 'requirement' & 'standard' which your magazine adopts. At the end of the day, all your readers look to your expertise to ensure that what we buy is exactly what you say it is. The current economic conditions does not allow consumers to buy as freely as we would like, so when we put that extra cash into the products that we so desire, we expect a high quality and top delivery from this product, and if companies that sell these products expect unfair reviews, then surely they are aware of the possible sub-standard of their product and should not even sell them, albeit that some companies would create less high quality products for the average consumer that cannot spend as much money on high level products. I applaud you and the magazine for taking this stance, and it has reassured me in buying products from your suppliers because I trust in the review you provide to me, the consumer."

I'm publishing this letter to prove the point and close the topic. Thanks to James and thousands of readers like him, NAG will always be strong because of your support, which is what I keep on trying to tell everyone. For us, it's always readers first and all the commercial and corporate nonsense second because without readers... Ed.

From: Stephan

Subject: Gamers vs. Normality

"ALL HAIL NAG, ULTIMATE gaming magazine! This following story is how my average day goes. Grabbing an assault rifle and shield pack from the rack in the spawning chamber (bedroom), I sprint towards the raging battle (everyday life). On arriving, I see that we are woefully outnumbered, so jumping out of cover, dodging incoming enemy fire and firing in return, I sprint for the hub of our bunker system (office). A few headshots and clips later I make it to the hub. Greeting the guard, I make my way inside, heeding the warning sirens and flashing lights I speed up, hoping I'm not too late. As I approach the core (console/PC), I get caught off-guard by a burst of bullets thudding into the wall above my head. Jumping back in surprise, I dive for cover, peeking around the edge I see a squad of enemy soldiers, wondering how

they penetrated our defences I lean out and fire into their midst, hitting one in his chest, grinning when I see the surprise on his face. The others having seen what happened to their squad mate take cover. Seeing this I throw in a flash bang closely followed by a frag hoping to catch them by surprise with this tactic. After the chaos I peek around the corner. Seeing no one left I head towards the core. Arriving with no further incidence, I feel relieved to have finally made it here. Hitting the power button, I sit down in front of the screen. Breathing a sigh of relief as the gaming world envelops me. And so the epic struggle continues between gamers and normality."

Nice one. I must shamefully blissfully admit that sometimes [okay, often] in traffic I do imagine pressing a big red button for an FFAR rocket pod and perhaps a browning M2 .50 to pop out from some hidden compartment in my car and I just tear myself some clear road [remembering to roll up the windows for smoke and fire hazards]. The other fantasy is using a power like Magneto from X-Men to simply clear the road ahead with a flick of my wrist - imagine all those cars piled up on the side of the road wherever you go... LOL. I won't go into my bank queue fantasies for fear of litigation and being accused of something about violins in gaming. :] Ed.

From: Jaco

Subject: PC Gamers - 0, Game Developers - 1

"I'VE BEEN CONSTANTLY BRUSHING my teeth since the release of Modern Warfare 2 (must get that just right cause I don't want someone to be writing you a letter telling you it's not Call Of Duty) but I just can't seem to get the taste of ass out of my mouth, cause that's what IW gave PC Gamers, a big old helping of ass. The sad part is, that they got away with it. [Call of Duty, Ed] Modern Warfare 2 is one of the most, if not the most, successful video game in history. What did we show IW here? That it's okay to do these things? That no matter how badly they ruin a game for us, we will still pay top dollar for it? Yes that's exactly the message we sent. Yes, we all like a little innovation, but if a developer announces a feature of the game and it gets the kind of negative response that the 'No Dedicated Servers' announcement had, then they should obviously change it! Now I'd like to refer you to another game I held dear, a little game that revolved around, building a base and gathering resources. Yes it's Command & Conquer! Official reports have stated that Command & Conquer 4 doesn't have base building or resource gathering? So wait? What's left? My point is, by making Modern Warfare 2 the success it was, we basically handed developers the keys to do absolutely what they want with our games, without any consequence... Other developers will no doubt follow the trend. This combined with the fact that PC games were getting the leftover attention from the developers already, has me seeing a dark age in PC gaming. Great Magazine guys! Keep it up!"

NAG Fan artwork

This is the best of what we received during the month. If you can insert, use or create a piece of gaming artwork, incorporating the NAG logo, you might also end up here for your three lines of fame.



Gareth Halkett-Amos: I've wanted to make a motivational poster for a while now so I thought about this after seeing the NAG Fan artwork. Hope you enjoy it :)."

Yeah. This is a tricky one. In terms of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 (after the first few patches) I've been playing it almost every other night. I know this is backtracking on what I originally said, but after much play testing (4 days, 0 hours and 10 minutes with 11,243 kills), I have to say that I really do love the game in spite of the perceived "limitations." I think there are some people who will be seriously affected (like competitive gamers and modification makers), but for the rest, it's a blast. It is annoying when developers take away our favourite parts or ideas in new games (no harvesting or too much colour in Diablo III), but we all need to move on and accept that things change and also remember that everything moves in cycles. Do take heart that the guys putting Battlefield: Bad Company 2 together quickly announced they will support dedicated servers – so, make sure you buy that game if you want to show support for "freedom." It's all about balance. Ed.

From: Mark C. (surname)

Subject: Bloopers

"H I COULD SOMEBODY PLEASE inform Dane Remendez that the mineral 'Unobtanium' he mentions in his review on Avatar was first mentioned in the 2003 movie The Core! Wake up!"

Dane Remendes, "LOL. Could someone please inform Mark C. (surname) that Remendes is spelt with an 'S'?"

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, "In engineering, fiction, or thought experiments, unobtainium is a humorous concept for any extremely rare, costly or physically impossible material

needed to fulfil a given design for a given application. The properties of any particular unobtainium depend on the intended use. For example, a pulley made of unobtainium might have no mass and be frictionless. However, if used in a nuclear rocket, unobtainium would be light, strong at high temperatures, and resistant to radiation damage. [I did fix the spelling and grammar from the source, as we're apparently supposed to do, Ed] Engineers have long (since at least the 1950s) used the term unobtainium when referring to unusual or costly materials, or when theoretically considering a material perfect for their needs in all respects save that it doesn't exist. By the 1990s the term was in wide use, even in formal engineering papers such as "Towards unobtainium [new composite materials for space applications]". The word unobtainium may well have been coined within the aerospace industry to refer to materials capable of withstanding the extreme temperatures expected in... [You get the idea, Ed]. You also spelt Unobtainium wrong. LOL, Ed.

From: Paul

Subject: The sorry state of the internet (in SA)

"RECENTLY, AFTER ACQUIRING THE Shivering Isles expansion pack, my interest in The Elder Scrolls IV was rekindled and I sought to improve my gaming experience even further. To do this, I took it upon myself to download some modifications; chief among these is the much lauded Qarl's Texture Pack. Weighing in at a portly 1.67 gigabytes compressed, this was by no means an unimportant affair. This download alone will account for more than half of my December data quota (cap). Unfortunately, seeing as I dwell in the lovely, sunny stone-age South Africa, my download speeds were deemed too puny by (foreign) servers, and I was timed-out. This, I thought, was just a hurdle and I set about trying to find a torrent of this free-to-share data. But the snags did not stop there, oh no! Being in a cluster with 13 seeders, and 23 other peers, I can connect to no one save a single peer! At no more than 2 kilobytes per second, I have been downloading for more than eight hours, and have just rolled onto 30% completion.

So after that, I hope you have glimpse of my pain, for it is exquisite. Which brings me to the point of my e-mail: My Internet is useless, and I can't expect you to put a file 1.67 gigabytes small on your DVD, is there any other way that I can get my mitts on this tasty piece of brilliance?"

I did a quick local site check without any luck (it wasn't exhaustive). I would suggest signing up for a file-download site account somewhere overseas with a proprietary download manager or similar. However, check out pages 32-33 in this issue and cast your vote – I can't promise we'll be able to solve everyone's problem with this idea, but at least we can try. Ed.

On The Forums

QUESTION: How many times did you see *James Cameron's Avatar*, and why? (140 characters or less!)

Incognito: "2 times: The story, the music, the atmosphere, the characters, Sigourney Weaver and it's a James Cameron written story. 'Nuff said!"

Tryxst3r: "Twice, 'cause it's pretty. They say that a picture is worth a thousand words, but a thousand words will not do a still from Avatar justice."

Wolfskunk: "Once, because it might literally blow my mind if I see it again. Cat people vs. angry marines more movies should be like this!"

CaViE: "Once when I watched Pocahontas, and again when I watched the ACTUAL Avatar movie... :P"

Chuluka: "Once. It was one of the better movies of the year IMO but I only ever watch a movie a second time if a friend who hasn't seen it wants to see it."

Karuji: "Once. Saw it in 3D the first time. It was very good. Not paying more money to see the same thing again."

Graal: "The first time because I neglected to see it in 3D, the second time because I wanted to feel what a proper nerdgasm felt like."

..Enigma..: "Twice, I went to a cinema with no 3D the first time, and I wanted to see it in all its glory, brilliant movie :)"

Kharrak: "Once. The main enjoyment was the cinematic 3-D experience, which will fade with repeat performances. That, and I've never been interested in watching repeats."

B0r0m1r: "None, I'm waiting till I'm near a 3D-Theater."

Demikid: "Once I prefer movies where all aliens get nuked or hit by a massive bomb"

FoX: "Once, in 3D I'll have to wait some months to watch it again for fear of my eyes exploding. YAY to blue cat people :3"

pArkEr: "Once, because I haven't went for my second viewing yet!"

onona: "Twice. And going to see it again soon. Because it's a visual feast and I'm not ashamed to admit that I had a nerdgasm over it."

Droolmonster: "3 going on 4... DONT MOCK ME! I love avatar, I even have a picture of a Na'vi babe as my background!! /me drool's... saw it 2 times in 3D and once in IMAX!!"

Almost A Hero: "Saw the 3D version twice: once in my left eye, once in my right. It was beautiful, entertaining and Colonel Quaritch was a total badass."

Bonezmnn: "None, haven't had the time (or finances) to go see it..."

Marry0+LewyG: "Twice, James Cameron, I was High both times, blue kittens."

Chainsaw: "Once, because pretty lights and shiny flowers can only hold your attention for so long."

Have your say on the NAG forums: forums.tidemia.co.za/nag/

Updates on Natal

Hardware cutbacks could cripple high-powered gaming potential

MICROSOFT'S MOTION-SENSING NATAL is on track for release this year, but the company has been forced to cut back a little to keep its price in check. In order to meet the projected sub-£50 (R600) retail price, Microsoft is removing the dedicated chip responsible for calculating the bones system. That's not to say that they're removing the function; however, rather, they're moving to a software solution that will be handled by the Xbox's CPU. This is a decision that could seriously limit the amount of power a Natal-enabled game will have access to, as current reports indicate that the system consumes up to 15% of the Xbox 360's total processing power, while others claim it may climb as high as 33%.

"The notion of offloading the processing to the Xbox 360 CPU

in the name of lower costs and easier upgradability makes sense," said *Eurogamer* technology editor Richard Leadbetter. "Patching up older games to run with the new hardware now looks rather unlikely unless they have the CPU time to spare, but hopefully this will serve to focus developers on Natal-specific concepts as opposed to revisiting old classics."

"I doubt we'll see any kind of watering down of the Natal concept with this news," Leadbetter continued, "but I'm not so sure about the comments on latency. My experience with Natal at gamescom suggests that the lag is considerably higher than that of a *Guitar Hero* peripheral. It'll be interesting to see if optimisation of the software layer improves this situation."



NO NEW CONSOLE REQUIRED

According to a senior manager at Microsoft, there is no need to launch a new Xbox console any time soon. David Hufford, senior director of Xbox product management, spoke to *The Guardian* at the recent CES event, saying: "I think it's important to say that the Xbox 360 is the console of the long future for us. There is no need to launch a new console, because we're able to give this console new life either with software upgrades or hardware upgrades like Project Natal."

"The Xbox 360 was designed for a long life and I don't even know if we're at the midpoint yet."

When asked if Microsoft would be introducing new chip technology to effectively lower the production costs of the console, Hufford said "We love our prices right now. I don't want to say that technology stops, but we believe we have a high quality console, and we stand by that quality with an unprecedented warranty, so we think we're in a good place now heading into the Natal era."



Microsoft jumps on - and rocks - the retro-wagon

There's just no stopping the growing trend of retro-gaming, it seems. Always a proponent of the classic side of gaming (just take a look around the XBL Marketplace), Microsoft has now taken the concept to a whole new level, and gone back about a decade or so further than most distributors.

The Microsoft Game Room is a single, organised facility for playing some of your favourite classic console and arcade titles. Each player will have access to an arcade room, which can be customised and kitted out with all sorts of retro memorabilia and themes, and filled with up to 1,000 games by time MS is done with it. The service, which operates on both Xbox 360 and PC,

will kick off with over 30 classic titles including *Crystal Castles*, *Asteroids Deluxe*, *Outlaw*, *Yar's Revenge* and *Gravitar*, from the arcade, Intellivision and Atari 2600 platforms (more platforms to come later). Microsoft claims that five to seven games will be added per week until the 1,000 target has been reached, which will take approximately three years. Microsoft Game Room will launch sometime between March and May, and games will cost a beefy 240-400 Microsoft Points each, or 40 for a single play - classic arcade-style. And, if you enjoy classic gaming on both console and PC, you're in luck - the games will be interchangeable between the two platforms.



Next Mega Man announced

If you're the type who loves inflicting pain on yourself, simply can't get enough of the retro throwbacks currently flooding the market, or simply love the idea of battling against an enemy called Sheep Man, this should rock your world. Running off of the success that was the retro-tastic *Mega Man 9*, which was released in September 2008 on WiiWare, XBLA and PSN, *Mega Man 10* will follow in its footsteps by featuring the classic *Mega Man* gameplay that we all love to hate (and hate to love). For those of you who don't enjoy masochistic gaming, there will also be an easy mode, which is supposedly only as easy as *Mega Man 2*. There will also be a mode called Mega Man Challenges mode for honing one's skills. The game will be released on the same three platforms, and should be available for download in March.

XBOX 360



Duke's not dead?

In one form or another, we'll see more Duke this year

OKAY, SO *DUKE NUKEM Forever* is dead, right? Well, maybe not. We're all aware that co-creator of *Duke* and co-founder of 3D Realms, George Brussard, drove the title into the ground through a series of bad decisions, indecision, and too much money; but what about the other co-founder, Scott Miller? Miller's a bit more of a reasonable businessman, it seems, and is keen to get the *Duke* brand back on its feet through a collection of sensible releases, rather than a single "motherload".

"The next few years should see a strong resurgence in Duke," said Miller. He's got some big plans to keep *Duke* in demand, including two upcoming iPhone games, a *Duke Nukem* Trilogy for the DS and PSP, and an XBLA port of the side-scrolling, retro-styled *Duke Nukem: Project Manhattan*. There's also mention of a scrapped project, called *Duke Begins*, in Take Two's recently-filed lawsuit against Miller and Brussard. Unfortunately (and we say that with pity), Miller's still convinced that *Duke Nukem Forever* isn't dead.

"We've never said that *Duke Nukem Forever* has ceased development. Yes, we released the internal team, but that doesn't correlate to the demise of the project."

After the last 12 years, we're at a point where talk is meaningless with this title, so, to save ourselves the pain, we're just going to write it off and be pleasantly surprised if ever it does see the light of day.

We'll leave you with one last bit of information to really set your head reeling with dizzy excitement: Duke's voice actor, Jon St. John, recently spoke of just how much he's not allowed to talk about *Forever*, when quizzed by journalists at the Music and Video Game Festival.

"I'm not allowed to speak on that subject, sir," St. John replied when asked about *DNF*. He added, "Let me go ahead and tell you right now: I'm not allowed to speak about *Duke Nukem Forever*." After receiving the obligatory booing, he went on to twist the truth even further. "No, no, don't be disappointed. Read between the lines. Why am I not allowed to talk about it?"

Diablo II gets patched

Few games have enjoyed continued success as Blizzard's *Diablo II*. With thousands of active players still hacking and slashing away on Battle.Net to this day, the developers are only too happy to continue support for the title, and have recently released a patch that will surely have fans cheering. This latest patch offers players the opportunity to respecialise (respec) their characters, essentially giving existing, possibly high-level, characters the chance to empty all of their skill points back into the pool and redistribute them as desired. Many games have included this feature for some time, so it's only fitting that such a legendary title share in the fun. If anything, it's the perfect opportunity to dig that big black and red box out of the cupboard, find your save games and finally give that mass skeleton-summoning Necro of yours a chance to survive in Hell. While it's not available at the time of writing (and therefore can't be on the cover disc), it should be ready for download by time you read this, head over to www.blizzard.com and search for the 1.13 patch.



FUNCOM BACK TO THE FUN

Despite taking a number of financial knocks since the launch of *Age of Conan*, Funcom is determined to make this MMO thing work for them. To help accomplish this, the company has formed SweetRobot, a subsidiary development studio that will focus solely on the production of social and casual MMOGs. The studio's first project, which the team of 15 has already been working on for two years, will be a game called *Pets vs. Monsters*. This title will be aimed at the 8- to 12 year-old audience, and will see players ride pets into battle while getting a taste of RPG-like character progression. There's no firm release date set yet, but the game will shortly enter a closed beta phase.

METAL SLUG XX++

DS owners have had their mitts on *Metal Slug 7* for almost a year now, and now it's time for the PSP to have its share of the (no-doubt crazy) action. Dubbed *Metal Slug XX*, the PSP version, which will be published by Atlus instead of SNK, includes a couple of fancy new tricks of the DS version. Combat School Mode, ad-hoc co-op play and a unique new character (available through a \$1 download) top off what is already a decent game. The game should be available by the end of February, and probably won't be too much of a download through PSN.



The price of friendship

Tony Hawk: Ride might seem like a gimmick to most, but Tony Hawk himself is taking it so seriously, he's promised to be your friend if you buy it. Evidentially, the sales are so low that the skateboarding legend is willing to prostitute his friendship in exchange for a purchase. Of course, this isn't the type of friendship where you've got The T-Man (which you'll lovingly call him) on speed-dial, ready to meet you at the mall for a skating session. No, this is just the online, "he'll probably just ignore your game invitations, and it's probably just a PR rep anyway" type of friendship. His Gamertag is *tonynegypt*, if you feel like stalking the poor fellow.

Giving back

Despite the economic downturn, industry-based charity Child's Play managed to raise a total of \$1.7 million for children's hospitals around the globe in 2009.

"Every year we think we've peaked, but each new year we get thousands of new gamers pitching in, coming up with their own events to raise funds," said Child's Play Foundation's coordinator Kristin Lindsay.

"At a time when most charities are struggling to get traditional donors to contribute, we've found that gamers are second to none in their willingness to donate their time and money to a worthy cause."

The money raised was used to send books, movies, games and other gifts to children's hospitals in across the US, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Egypt over the 2009 festive season.

It's good to see the videogame industry giving back. Corporate sponsors of the Child's Play charity include Microsoft, Harmonix, Wizards of the Coast, PopCap, Bioware and Ubisoft.



Another Salt Mine?

Apparently, working for Rockstar San Diego is a thankless, stressful job. The studio, which is currently developing *Red Dead Revolver*, has been accused of a number of nasty labour practices in a poorly worded letter published by Gamasutra.

The letter, signed by the "determined devoted wives of Rockstar San Diego employees," claims a number of offences, including employees forced to work 12 hour shifts six days a week, dishonest management and poor remuneration. Apparently, employees have also seen a rise in stress and a decline in health.

Bonuses and salary increases were strongly mentioned in the letter, with the author stating: "The last *Grand Theft Auto* game made over a billion dollars of revenue. So where is the recognition and appreciation to those whom, without them, such success would not have been made?"

EA suffered similar accusations a while ago, with the highly publicised EA Spouse blog getting the most attention.

"Get back to sleep!"

We had no idea this was a problem, but apparently, Olympic athletes are struggling to put down the gaming controller the night before a big race or training session. Dr Marco Cardinale, working with the British Olympic Association, has released a set of guidelines for the safe use of videogames during peak training times. It's all common sense, really, but here they are, just in case you plan on becoming a professional athlete alongside your illustrious pro gaming career:

1) If you are travelling to train and compete and are crossing time zones, avoid using your laptop, DVD player, iPod and similar tools and videogame devices during the night. Get back to sleep!

2) If you are training and/or competing the following day, avoid all of the above the night before such activities (training and competing) take place.

3) Recovery time is meant to be for rest and peace. You don't want to play *Street Fighter* with your best mate and have your blood pressure, heart rate and cortisol levels go sky high because you lose!

4) There is a time and place and, most of all, a duration for your gaming and computing activities, make sure you don't negatively affect your performance because of that!

They said it...

"We're a company of gamers. I have two consoles at home. Sam [Didier, art director] has consoles. **We're a culture of gamers. We will definitely work on a console game at some point.** I have no doubt about that."

Allen Brack, Producer at Blizzard

"Development on Wii is very difficult, with an oversupply of games and a gamer market that has radically changed. **Two years ago, there were still hardcore gamers on Wii,** [but these have been] diverted from this console in favour of the new generation."

Antoine Seux, CEO of Capcom France

"The shooter space is one we don't want to give up. It's an important genre and we were the number one. **So we are certainly working on how we can get that crown back and Battlefield: Bad Company 2 is an important product in that context.**"

Jens Uwe, CEO of EA Europe

"We don't want kids to watch porn, [but] **studies have found that violent video games are much bigger a negative influence on kids.**"

Ron Jeremy, adult entertainment star



FEEL THE POWER
GAMER XTREME



THE COOLER MASTER GX-SERIES POWER SUPPLIES STAND FOR GAMER XTREME, THE EVOLVED VERSION OF EXTREME POWER PLUS. WITH UP TO 60 AMPS ON A SINGLE RAIL, THERE IS ENOUGH POWER TO START UP A CAR. IMAGINE WHAT IT CAN DO FOR YOUR SYSTEM. WITH SO MUCH POWER AT YOUR DISPOSAL, COOLER MASTER ENSURES THE MOST STRINGENT SAFETY STANDARDS ARE MET. THE EXTENDED 5-YEAR WARRANTY IS INCLUDED TO GIVE YOU FURTHER PIECE OF MIND.



Sonic Informed
COMPONENT IMPORTER & DISTRIBUTOR
WWW.SONICINFORMED.COM

Johannesburg
Tel: 011 314 5800
Fax: 011 252 5974

Cape Town
Tel: 021 551 8218
Fax: 021 551 8244

coolermaster.com



The rumour mill churns

WHILE MOST SENSIBLE GAMERS are still happily hammering away at that next level of Prestige in *Modern Warfare 2*, or sitting tight in anticipation of Treyarch's next offering (see below), an impatient few already want to know what Infinity Ward is up to next. The rumours are interesting, to say the least, but may not be everyone's cup of tea. Let's have a look at them...

The first rumour (and we stress that these are rumours; we just like playing the gossip sometimes) is that *Modern Warfare 3* won't be developed by Infinity Ward. The company apparently has their minds focused on other things right now, and isn't too keen to pick up the Adventures of Soap in Terrorist

Land after *MW2*'s DLC packs are done and dusted. This leads us to reveal rumour #2, which claims that a third studio will step in to possibly pick up the trail.

Topping all of that is the speculation that IW is actually working on an MMO. Not necessarily a CoD based one, however. Apparently, IW has been hiring employees from Sony Online Entertainment, one of which may be the lead designer from *EverQuest II*, as well as a couple of troops from Blizzard for consultation purposes. Stretching that speculation even further, it's possible that this MMO will run alongside future releases from the *Call of Duty* series, to be run by IW as their only focus.

Call of Duty 7 confirmed

Here's something that's totally not a surprise: there will be a new *Call of Duty* released this year; it will be developed by Treyarch Studios. What you may not have been able to predict is the setting, however. While many speculated that it would actually be something kind of unique and interesting (an alternative-history Cold War was bandied about), Treyarch has instead decided to stick to the tried and trusted war game settings box, and chosen the Vietnam War for *Call of Duty 7* (title pending). Few other details are available at this stage, but we know that the game will be released in November, and development is on course with Activision breathing heavily down Treyarch's neck the whole way. All we can say is: there better be zombies.



MORE AWARDS FOR MW2

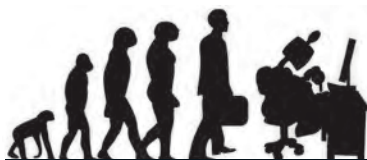
Modern Warfare 2 may have shattered sales records on both PS3 and Xbox 360, but its reception on the PC was less than impressive. While exact figures are about as elusive as a clan without a camper, it's estimated that PC sales only accounted for around 3% of the total figure. Using a process that we like to call Science™, that puts total PC sales just below the 500,000 mark – so not exactly a slouch. Regardless, that's nothing compared to the total number of times that the pirate copy has been downloaded, which TorrentFreak claims is over 4.1 million times – marking it as the winner of 2009's Most Pirated Award. Congratulations. The Xbox version, which falls just short of 1 million downloads, took the award in the Xbox category, as well. As expected, the PS3 continues to shrug off the global trend of rising piracy, with, like, zero downloads.

Busted!

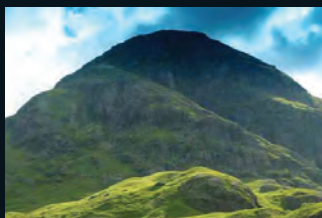
Criminals all over the world have long been using the Internet to conduct their schemes. Hidden under a veil of anonymity, they're free to go about their business, safe in the knowledge that most law officials don't stand a chance of successfully hunting them down. That didn't stop Howard County Sheriff Department deputy Matt Roberson from trying, however.

When multiple-convicted drug dealer Alfred Hightower fled the USA in 2007, after a warrant for his arrest was issued, officials had all but lost hope. Except Roberson, who persisted with the investigation that eventually led him to discover that Hightower is an avid *World of Warcraft* player (termed by friends as "some warlock and witches game"). So, Roberson sent a politely-worded but by no-means enforceable subpoena to Blizzard, requesting any information they could provide on Hightower. Months passed, and Roberson put it to the back of his mind, until, finally, Blizzard sent him a ton of information. IP addresses, account information, billing address, screen name and even preferred servers. Using that information, an IP-lookup, and Google Earth, Roberson was able to establish Hightower's exact location – in neighbouring Canada. A quick call to the Mounties, and the perpetrator was taken into custody.





Evolution of SAND



5,000,000 BC (mountain)



100,000 BC (boulder)



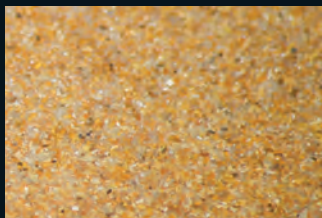
35,000 BC (rock)



2,000 BC (stone)



0 AD (pebble)



2009 AD (sand)

Why the hippies hate Nintendo

We're not sure if the good people at Nintendo simply don't care, or if they're just unable to comply with modern green manufacturing principles, but, once again, they've landed themselves right at the bottom of Greenpeace's notorious Guide to Greener Electronics study with a meagre 1.4 out of 10 points for chemical, e-waste and energy policies. While they did manage to make a few improvements, notably in the reduction of PVC in its internals and its low-power DSi AC adapter, it performed comparatively poorly alongside the 17 other companies included in the study.

Right on Nintendo's tail is Microsoft, scoring only 2.4 points. Sony fared considerably better by slotting in at 7th place, although the stringent criteria used for the study means the company only managed to muster a score of 5.1. The leaderboard was topped by Nokia, Sony Ericsson and Toshiba, with Apple and HP trailing behind.

"We would like to assure customers that we take our environmental responsibilities seriously and are rigorous in our commitment to comply with all relevant laws relating to environmental and product safety, including avoiding the use of dangerous substances in our manufacturing processes and ensuring the safe disposal and recycling of materials," Nintendo said in a statement to *Eurogamer*.

"We consider the environmental impact of our products over their entire life cycle, from planning to disposal. We also consider the importance of reducing environmental impact at end-of-life disposal by clearly indicating the materials used in each product to make recycling easier.

Finally, a new DS

Despite constant rumours, Nintendo president Satoru Iwata has vehemently refused to comment on the Nintendo DS's successor... until now.

"[It will have] highly detailed graphics, and it will be necessary to have a sensor with the ability to read the movements of people playing," Iwata tells Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*.

While motion control is currently available for a few DS games, with the aid of an attachment, this next iteration will feature the technology right out of the box. There's no confirmation as to how that will be achieved, however – camera, accelerometer or gyroscope – but an iPhone-like tilt mechanism makes the most sense to us. There's also speculation mounting about the details of the "highly detailed graphics," with many claiming that the new DS will use NVIDIA's Tegra solution. As always, time will tell. Stay tuned for details as they emerge.

* Timeline illustrative and not to scientific scale



CENTURION 5 II

THE LEGEND IS BACK

The all new Centurion 5 II has been vastly improved from the inside. This mid-tower chassis is designed with increased drive bay capacity, more airflow thanks to the enhanced ventilation and fan options and easy-to-install features. This is a multi-purpose chassis that you cannot go wrong with.

Airflow improvement

"/>

Sonic Informed
COMPONENT IMPORTER & DISTRIBUTOR
WWW.SONICINFORMED.COM

Johannesburg
Tel: 011 314 5800
Fax: 011 252 5974

Cape Town
Tel: 021 551 8218
Fax: 021 551 8244

coolermaster.com



No friends? No problem!

IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN following the torrent of updates for Valve's popular class-centric FPS *Team Fortress 2*, you've been missing out on some real gems. AI-controlled bots have now (finally) made their way into the game. Small groups of LANners and friends (or even single players) can now play with a full pitch in many of the game modes. At the time of writing, these bots are not yet complete, but we've had a chance to play around with them and were surprised by their humanlike behaviour a number of times.

"With the success of the AI systems

of *Left 4 Dead*, we've been continuing to develop these technologies to create new kinds of game experiences," said Valve's Mike Booth. "*Team Fortress 2* is an excellent 'sandbox' for explorations of this sort, and we've been quietly doing so for much of this last year."

Booth continued, "The bots have simulated humanlike senses, and only know what they see, hear and touch. They also have realistic reaction times and aiming limitations. They don't 'cheat' or use omniscient knowledge of the server state to make their decisions."

Left 4 modders

Modders can now officially start tinkering with Valve's latest offering, *Left 4 Dead 2*, thanks to the release of the updated Authoring Tools and add-on support. The download, which is in two pieces (a smaller download for players, and the other for designers as well) allows modders to make use of all the new features found in L4D2 and bring them to their own, custom-built campaigns and maps. The updated features include: Gamemode Logic, which allows modders to build a single map for use in multiple game modes (and dynamically change them accordingly), Director Logic, which allows players to change the map depending on how "angry" the A.I. Director becomes, and support for the new Scavenge Mode, with new game props. There's also an updated tutorial to get people started, so what are you waiting for? Both files can be downloaded from within the game; just look under the tools tab.



SHINY, HAPPY PEOPLE

Half-Life 2 may have blown us all away when it was released in 2004, but a lot has changed, both in terms of the Source Engine and other technologies, that leaves the game looking pretty shabby when compared to even the uglier games of today. Thankfully, all of those problems are in the past, thanks to the ingenuity of modder Filip Victor of the Steam forums. The *Half-Life 2* Update mod was finally released recently, and adds a hefty 1.5GB of stuff to the original *Half-Life 2*. It includes updates to the Orange Box Engine, adds HDR lighting, updates tons of models and textures, and even adds in 32 new Steam achievements for the game. Unfortunately, the size of this mod means that it couldn't fit onto this month's cover disc, but for those with the bandwidth to spare you can head over to <http://forums.steampowered.com/forums/showthread.php?t=1093025>.

On top of LIVE

It's undeniable that online services for gaming are huge (particularly in countries where they are actually supported) and so it's no surprise that Microsoft is very happy to announce that one of their own titles has taken the top slot for most played games on the Xbox LIVE servers.

That game, naturally, is *Halo 3*. While many people may have assumed that *Modern Warfare 2* would have taken the top slot, it actually comes in at third place, with *Call of Duty 4* also beating it in the popularity stakes, taking second place.

Call of Duty: World at War is the third CoD title in the top five, placing fourth, with *Gears of War 2* occupying the fifth slot.

The rest of the top ten are, in order: *GTA IV*, *Left 4 Dead*, *Halo 3: ODST*, *Fable II: Episode 1* and a shared spot for *Biohazard 5* and *Resident Evil 5*.



He who controls the spice...

We don't usually bother too much with movie news, since we know you're all too busy pwning noobs to go to the cinema, but this is worth it. Pierre Morel, director of the awesome *Taken* and *From Paris with Love*, is in charge of the new film adaption of Frank Herbert's *Dune*, and he's got some great ideas to bring the series back to its roots.

"As a David Lynch movie, I loved it. [But] as a *Dune* fan [of the book], I was not such a big fan," said Morel in a recent interview.

"[My movie] is all about the first book. I'm trying to be very respectful to the original novel," he explained. "But it's a challenge; there's a lot of expectation, all the readers will be waiting for me with their shotguns. All the non-readers will also be waiting for us, because it's such a complex, rich novel and you have to make it accessible to those who have not read the book. So, it's a tough challenge but I'm very excited about that."

Gaming Charts

Look & Listen
DVD • CD • GAMES — MP3 • ACCESSORIES

LOOK & LISTEN RECOMMENDS...

PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 Assassin's Creed II
- 2 Darksiders
- 3 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2
- 4 James Cameron's Avatar: The Game
- 5 BioShock 2

XBOX 360

- 1 Forza Motorsport 3
- 2 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2
- 3 Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories
- 4 FIFA 10
- 5 Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Conviction

PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010
- 2 FIFA 10
- 3 Bakugan
- 4 Silent Hill: Shattered Memories
- 5 Ben 10 Alien Force: Vilgax Attacks

PC

- 1 The Sims 3: World Adventures
- 2 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2
- 3 Need for Speed: Shift
- 4 Assassin's Creed II
- 5 Warhammer 40000: Dawn of War II

PSP

- 1 Need for Speed: Shift
- 2 WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010
- 3 Gran Turismo
- 4 Ben 10 Alien Force: Vilgax Attacks
- 5 Silent Hill: Shattered Memories

WII

- 1 New Super Mario Bros.
- 2 Wii Sports Resort
- 3 Need for Speed: Nitro
- 4 Wii Fit Plus
- 5 Guitar Hero: Van Halen

DS

- 1 New Super Mario Bros.
- 2 Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story
- 3 Pokémon Platinum
- 4 World of Zoo 2
- 5 Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes



November 2009 figures provided by GfK
www.gfksa.co.za

PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2
- 2 FIFA 10
- 3 Assassin's Creed II
- 4 Need for Speed: Shift
- 5 Tekken 6

XBOX 360

- 1 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2
- 2 Forza Motorsport 3
- 3 Assassin's Creed II
- 4 FIFA 10
- 5 Grand Theft Auto: Episodes From Liberty City

PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 FIFA 10
- 2 Bakugan Battle Brawlers
- 3 WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010
- 4 FIFA 08
- 5 Pro Evolution Soccer 2010

PC

- 1 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2
- 2 The Sims 3: World Adventures
- 3 Dragon Age: Origins
- 4 The Sims 3
- 5 Need for Speed: Underground 2

PSP

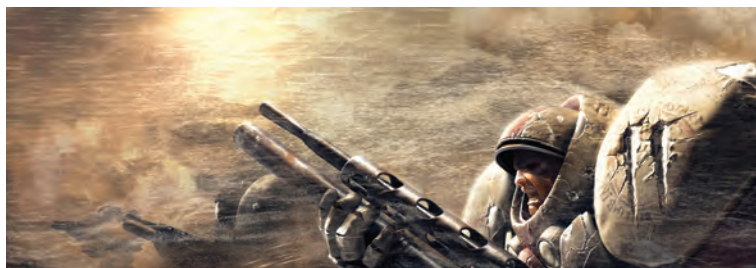
- 1 FIFA 10
- 2 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
- 3 Gran Turismo 5
- 4 Gran Turismo 5
- 5 Need for Speed: Shift

WII

- 1 Wii Sports
- 2 Wii Sports Resort + MotionPlus
- 3 Wii Fit + Balance Board
- 4 Wii Fit
- 5 Ashes Cricket 2009

DS

- 1 Brain Training
- 2 New Super Mario Bros.
- 3 Bakugan Battle Brawlers
- 4 SimAnimals
- 5 Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games



Protoss in my Wings of Liberty?

Okay, we know, you're probably so totally over this whole *StarCraft II* thing by now. But we're not, and still eagerly soak up any informative drippings from its creators. The latest tidbit: despite that *Wings of Liberty* (episode 1 of 3 of SCII) is a Terran-only campaign, there will be a Protoss mini-campaign along for the ride, which we think is a nice touch.

"This part of the campaign mode is of course way shorter than the Terran part, but it is very fun to have a very different play style to add even more variety to the game," said an official member of the community team. "That being said, the Protoss mini-campaign will not prepare you for the multiplayer as Protoss, you won't be using all units or getting to know buildings and upgrades."



SILENT PRO M

Whisper Quiet Computing Power



Single+12V Rail
More Power for Over-Clockers



Modularized Flat Cable
Smarter Cable Management



Ultra Silent 135 mm Fan
Best Heat Transfer and Dissipation



Copper + Aluminum Heat Sink
Excellent Air Flow with Intelligent Speed Control



500/600/700/
850W/1000W Series



Sonic Informed
COMPONENT IMPORTER & DISTRIBUTOR
WWW.SONICINFORMED.COM

Johannesburg
Tel: 011 314 5800
Fax: 011 252 5974

Cape Town
Tel: 021 551 8218
Fax: 021 551 8244

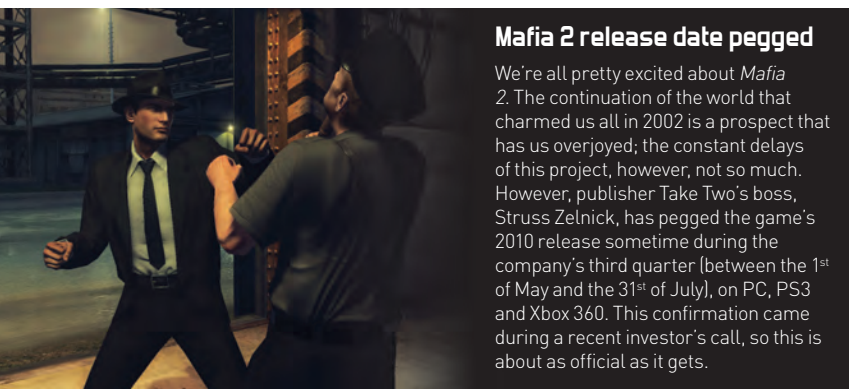
coolermaster.com



Hey big spender

SOMETIMES, PEOPLE SPEND a lot of money on things that exist only in an online game. It's nothing new, but this growing trend recently witnessed a record-shattering purchase of \$330,000 (that's over R2.4 million). The game is *Planet Calypso*, a Sci-Fi MMO that uses an in-game currency, called Project Entropia Dollars, that is instantly exchangeable with real-world money at a rate of 10PED to \$1.

So, why on Earth would anyone spend that much money on something that doesn't exist? The purchased item is actually an entire space station, the Crystal Palace, that sees a ton of traffic every day from hunting, gathering and shopping, all of it bringing in in-game revenue from a tax that owner Erik Novak can set. This isn't the first time a location has sold for large amounts of money in *Planet Calypso*: Treasure Island sold for \$26,500 in 2004, and the new owner recovered the cost in the first 12 months. A virtual space resort was sold for \$100,000 in 2005. The money made from hunting and mining rights alone managed to rake in \$50,000 during the first five months. It's all about making your money work for you.



Mafia 2 release date pegged

We're all pretty excited about *Mafia 2*. The continuation of the world that charmed us all in 2002 is a prospect that has us overjoyed; the constant delays of this project, however, not so much. However, publisher Take Two's boss, Struss Zelnick, has pegged the game's 2010 release sometime during the company's third quarter (between the 1st of May and the 31st of July), on PC, PS3 and Xbox 360. This confirmation came during a recent investor's call, so this is about as official as it gets.

THE DOWNTURN

The latest Chart-Track figures released by ELSPA show that the sale of new, boxed video game products in the UK declined by 18 per cent in 2009. Only the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 formats saw an increase over sales figures for 2008. PlayStation 3 titles sold came to 11.9 million, while Xbox 360 games totalled 16.2 million and Wii products added up to 18.1 million. PC software sales dropped to 6.2 million for 2009. These figures do not include second-hand sales, nor do they include direct-download sales. On the console hardware front, sales also declined, with only the PlayStation 3 showing growth in 2009.



THE BAGINATOR

So we all know the history of the poor badger, stomped by a demon and then resurrected, lost to the Internet torrents, only to return as the Dread Pirate Badger. All of this left him with a peg leg, an eyepatch and a healthy respect for demons.

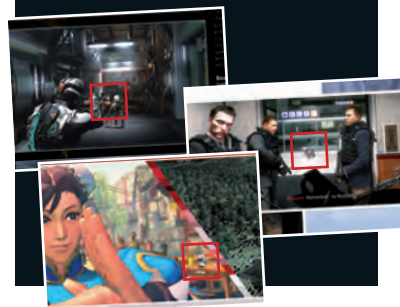
And so his story continues...

On the weekends, the badger likes to run free in the long savannah grass near the highway by the airport. Often he dashes across the road (you know... to get to the other side). The peg leg and eyepatch have robbed him of his usual nimbleness. Too bad he didn't spot that truck carrying cybernetic body parts, which was luckily followed by an ambulance full of cybernetic doctors and scientists, which was luckily followed by a military jeep on its way to Vicinity 42 in Kempton Park (they do advanced experiments here in an underground lab). They worked for days on the battered remains of our poor badger and finally produced what you see on this page. He's still hiding (they wanted to use him for nefarious purposes) in the magazine – go get him. Remember, it's not going to be easy anymore – he's more advanced.

Send your sightings to ed@dnag.co.za with the subject line 'February Badger' and stand a chance to win Genius Luxemate 525 Star Cruiser gaming keyboard sponsored by Genius.

LAST MONTH'S WINNER

Rabbids: JJ Williams, pgs 31, 42, 85



ULTIMATE EDITION

NOW ON PRE-ORDER

BL
GAMES™



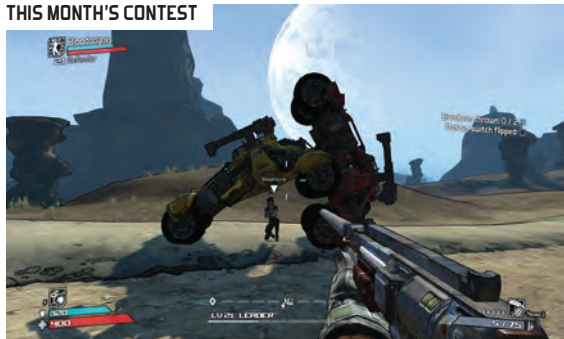
- Pandora's Box
- God of War Artbook
- PS3 God of War III Ultimate Edition
- Dominus Skin
- 7 Unique Combat Arena Challenges
- "Unearthing The Legend" Documentary
- God of War Inspired Heavy Metal Album
- God of War Trilogy Soundtrack

Caption of the Month

Every month we'll choose a screenshot from any random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better caption. The winner will get a copy of MAG for PS3, sponsored by Ster-Kinekor Entertainment. Send your captions to edf@nag.co.za with the subject line [February Caption].



THIS MONTH'S CONTEST



NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT AT HUMOUR:
Female driver FAIL, No. 942

LAST MONTH'S WINNER



"Once again, Jimmy failed to catch the red frisbee."
– Sam Pennington

PREVIOUS MONTH'S WINNER



"This is your pilot speaking. We are now entering an enclosed neighborhood. If you look to your left you'll see the friendly security guard lifting the boom gate..." – Wahl Lessing

Events

MAGIC THE GATHERING

NOVVA'S FRIDAY NIGHT MAGIC

When: Every Friday
Time: 19:00

Type: Standard, Constructed

Cost: R30
novvagaming.co.za

2-HEADED GIANT, EXTENDED/VINTAGE

On request
novvagaming.co.za

LANs

FRAG LAN

When: 29 Jan
Where: TBA

Type: OpenLAN
langames.co.za

FORGELAN

When: 29 Jan
Where: JHB

Type: OpenLAN
langames.co.za

NOVVA LAN

When: 6 Feb
Where: Novva Gaming, JHB

Type: OpenLAN
langames.co.za

FRAG LAN

When: 26 Feb
Where: TBA

Type: OpenLAN
langames.co.za

MAYHEM

MARCH 2010

When: 27 Mar
Where: Boksburg

Type: OpenLAN
langames.co.za

YU-GI-OH!

TOURNAMENTS

When: Saturdays

Time: 10:00

Where: Novva Gaming, JHB
novvagaming.co.za

BL GAMES™ Release List

Release dates subject to change

WEEK 1: FEBRUARY

TITLE	PLATFORMS
The Sims 3: High-End Loft Stuff	PC
The Sims 3: Create a Sim	PC
Dante's Inferno	PS3, 360, PSP
Star Trek Online	PC
Alpha Protocol	PC, 360, PS3

WEEK 2: FEBRUARY

TITLE	PLATFORMS
Ben 10 Alien Force: Vilgax Attacks	360, PS2, PSP, Wii, DS
MX vs. ATV	PS3, 360, PSP, DS
BioShock 2	PC, 360, PS3
MAG	PS3
Karaoke Revolution	PS3, Wii
S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Call of Pripyat	PC
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs – Fireteam Bravo	PSP
LittleBigPlanet: Game of the Year Edition	PS3

WEEK 4: FEBRUARY

TITLE	PLATFORMS
Aliens vs. Predator	360, PS3
Lost Planet 2	360, PS3
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Conviction	PC, 360
Anno 1404: Add-on	PC



Dragon Age expands

DLC for *Dragon Age: Origins* has been running a bit behind schedule, but that hasn't stopped the developers from working on the game's first expansion (or, rather, perhaps that's the cause of the delays). The expansion, entitled *The Awakening*, is due out in March this year and is said to pack in an extra 15 hours of new content and, of course, new items, spells, skills and specialisations. As well as a new location, Amaranthine, it also adds a new origin – the Grey Warden of Orlais – and five new party members who are just dying to join you in battle.





BY MIKTAR DRACON

Klingon Weddings

SO, KLINGONS, RIGHT? THE guys with the ribbed-for-her-pleasure foreheads in that show *Star Trek*? Yeah, they're not real, right? You know that, I know that, everyone knows that. They're a work of fiction, they're space fantasy. Space ships! Androids! Singularities! Pew-pew lasers! Space fantasy is fun.

In the *Star Trek* canon, Klingons are like noble space orcs that speak in a guttural made-up vowel-free language raped by apostrophes. They think dying on most days is a rather good thing, and generally, they solve their problems through deft application of punch-that-guy or shoot-that-thing. It's all good fun, in that Gene Roddenberry-hermetically-sealed funny-nose-alien-of-the-week way, where Earl Grey Tea and Mozart are considered the pinnacles of culture in our future post-scarcity society.

Okay, knowing all this, it's understandable that you get fans of the show that, y'know, relate to Klingons (or any of the other funny-nose-alien species). Some fans attend conventions to get autographs from the actor who played Worf, a popular Klingon. Some fans dress up like Klingons, and it's cute, from a distance. Some fans make a point of learning the fictional Klingon language, and that's cute, in a nerdy way, from a distance. Some people, who aren't even fans, will teach the fictional Klingon language to their newborns, just as an experiment. That's cute, in a creepy, mad-scientist, from a distance kind of way.

It's all good fun! No self-respecting gamer can stand in judgement of such good fun, because self-respecting gamers know that they wouldn't want anyone to stand in judgement of the good fun Mr Self-Respecting Gamer enjoys. After all, we've all had sex with that hooker in *GTA*, then caved her head in with a baseball bat just to get our cash back, right? Good fun! Good fun.

There is a dark side, however, to good fun. A dark, evil side that quickly tears apart the fun, the good, and everything in between. Such an evil, dark not fun is talked about in hushed tones around the *Star Trek* conventions. You see, and I hate to bring it up because once you know, you cannot "un-know," but some people, they argue. Not just about Kirk vs. Picard and who is the better Starfleet Captain, no. Even those are still good fun, in a geeky argument kind of way.

Now hold fast, steel yourself, and prepare: there are those who argue, with all seriousness and without a trace of irony, over the correct way to have a Klingon wedding. Arguments over Klingon weddings! People have heated, intelligent, angry, researched and drawn-out arguments over the right way to hold a proper, ribbed-space-orc wedding ceremony! Does it matter that Klingons aren't real? Of course not. What matters is that Klingon Guy A says one is supposed to hold the *D'a'putk* Ceremonial Dagger aligned with the pelvis while reciting the *Sn'a'kar're'er* to one's *Yr'aj'kre*, while Klingon Guy B says that's totally wrong dude and if you check this official canon book here you're supposed to hold the *D'a'putk* above your head while professing your *Br'r'kra* to your *Yr'aj'kre*!

Hey, dumbass brothers! Klingons aren't real! There is no "right way," no "supposed to be like this" kind of way, even if

you did buy the *Official Klingon Handbook* from that guy at that convention. Fiction is fiction, and no matter how detailed you make a rulebook for fiction, it'll remain fiction. That's the fun of fiction! Say with me... FICTION! Yeah, fiction.

Where did they go wrong? How did they manage to take something as beautiful and fun as a flight of fancy, and "transmutate" it into the horrible nerd-rage that eats away at the fringe of a once healthy geekdom? What's that, Jean Luc Picard of the U.S.S. Enterprise? You say that it all went to hell when the fans lost the ability to differentiate between their opinions and reality? Why, that's horrible! Why would someone willingly do such a thing! It'd be like cutting off your own Mr HappyFunTime because you tell yourself you'd do just fine without it regardless of what the doctors say! Okay, that's not quite right, but I'm sure there's a valid metaphor in there somewhere.

It's just too terrible to consider: grown "men-children," ignorant of their own self-deluded affirmations that what they think is true must be true because that's what they do! Oh, the humanity, as the gentle line between fact and opinion dissolves in their minds like a wispy cloud-like thingy as a strong wind blows in from the East. Or something. Metaphors are not my strong point today. Anyway, so these nerds actually argue seriously over something that stupid.

This kind of thing happens in gaming all the time, and once you notice it, it's hard to "un-notice." Sure, we're all having passionate fun here, because games rock and we love them and we want to protect them and make sure they marry right so they'll have a future and tons of grandchildren for us to play with in a totally not-paedophile way...

So, remember kids: don't be that guy who argues over Klingon weddings. **NAG**

Where did they go wrong? **How did they manage to take something as beautiful and fun as a flight of fancy, and "transmutate" it into the horrible nerd-rage** that eats away at the fringe of a once healthy geekdom?

ASSASSIN'S CREED II™



5TH MARCH
WWW.ASSASSINSCREED.COM



ALSO AVAILABLE ON



XBOX 360™



PS3
PlayStation 3



PlayStation®Portable

megarom
www.megarom.co.za
+27 11 361 4800 | sales@megarom.co.za



UBISOFT

©2009 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Assassin's Creed, Assassin's Creed II, the Assassin's Creed logo and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Xbox, Xbox 360 and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies. PlayStation and PSP Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other marks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved.



BY MIKLÓS SZECSEI

Hey, you got gaming in my real life

REAL LIFE IS ADMIN. Admit it, you've thought this yourself and possibly on numerous occasions too. Perhaps the realisation dawned on you when you had to stop playing *Borderlands* because you needed to go and renew your driver's licence. Or perhaps it was when wave twenty-six of Horde in *Gears of War 2* had to be put on hiatus because you needed to go grocery shopping after not eating properly for three days. The bottom line is this: as gamers we exist in two realities at once. In the one, we are in control and we have a load of functional game mechanics to aid us. In the other, we are trying desperately to maintain at least a semblance of control, so that we can appear socially astute and goal-driven. One of these "realities" has been created by a bunch of artists and very clever programmers, and the other is a true reality, jam-packed with enough mundanity to crush the most frivolous of spirits.

I've often thought how much easier and fun the real reality (how superfluous!) would be were it to learn a few things from gaming's created realities. For example: I recently moved. Moving is a huge amount of admin. It involves an obscene quantity of packing, dozens of boxes, manual labour and thorough organisation. It was a massive pain in the backside and absolutely nothing like it is in *The Sims* – I felt lied to and completely shafted by the reality check. Somebody needs to work on a better system for moving large volumes of furniture, books and other household items from one area to another. I'm a huge fan of the method utilised in *The Sims*: you pick up the phone, dial some deity in charge of moving, and then simply wander off to your new abode, only to find all of your belongings waiting for you. It's seamless, rather slick, takes about two minutes and is (depressingly) absolutely nothing like the experience I went through.

Reality also lacks a tangible indication that you've done something awesome. Sure, sometimes your friends or family members are in close proximity to give you a high-five, but what about those daunting moments when there isn't any accessible, positive reinforcement? Can you imagine how much more motivating daily living would be if you were given

achievement notifications whenever you did something laudable? It would be invaluable at certain moments and I can think of several practical applications, most of which are too risqué for the family-friendly ethos of NAG. Of course, this would create a new breed of person who would be hell-bent on squeezing every last drop of achievement satisfaction out of everyday life. It would also open up an entirely new market for real-world walkthroughs and achievement guides, the commercial viability of which is overwhelming. Until that happens, perhaps I'll change the SMS tone on my cellphone to the Xbox 360 achievement pop. That way, whenever somebody texts me I can feel a flush of accomplishment no matter what I'm doing. I could be in the middle of cooking dinner, or wondering why there is no quicksave-quickload functionality to my life, but whatever it may be, the mundane would magically transform into a moment of feel-good affirmation.

On the topic of notifications, some sort of indication that constant repetition of an action is making an improvement would be invaluable. I got a puppy for Christmas, and while she's cuter than a bucket of kittens smothered in extra-sweet "Awww Sauce," she's also a handful. Now, if she had some RPG stats to track, then I'm sure the whole training procedure would be that much easier: "Your puppy is now a level 2 outdoor pooper". Hell, I'd even settle for a progress bar floating above her head to let me know when toilet time is approaching.

Of course, were all of these game mechanics and abilities transposed to everyday life, they would completely suck all of the mystery and uncertainty from reality. New experiences would become few and far between, and all the enjoyment from serendipitous occurrences would cease as people constantly referred to achievement guides. Now that I think about it, I'm not sure this is something I'd want. One of the greatest things in life is uncertainty, as it keeps things fresh and – ah stuff it, let's just apply them anyway. It'll be fun and will make things a hell of a lot easier. **NAG**

Your Sense of Humour has increased by 1 point.



Achievement unlocked
10G - Related to a totally awesome column

MASS EFFECT 2



ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAM

FIGHT FOR THE LOST

Human colonies are disappearing. Your mission is to find out why and bring it to an end. You're not expected to survive, but that's never stopped you before. Assemble an unlikely team of criminals, warriors, and biotics to fight for the lost.

AVAILABLE JANUARY 29TH

MASSEFFECT.COM



XBOX 360.



Scaleform

BIOWARE™



© 2010 EA International (Studio and Publishing) Ltd. Mass Effect, Mass Effect logo, BioWare and BioWare logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of EA International (Studio and Publishing) Ltd. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All Rights Reserved. EA and EA logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies and are used under license from Microsoft. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

SPEC OPS: THE LINE

Developer → Yager Development Publisher → 2K Games Web → www.specopsthegame.com Release Date → TBA Platforms → PC | Xbox 360 | PS3 Genre → Third-Person Shooter

Sand: that s**t gets everywhere...

MY FIRST TIME LEAVING South Africa didn't play out the way that I'd always envisioned it would. I didn't leave the country together with my family or my girlfriend with a relaxing vacation being the primary driving force. Instead, I was sent on my first international adventure alone - amidst a flurry of last-second preparation and nervousness (at the thought of travelling to another continent without anyone to accompany me). I was off to Berlin, Germany, as a representative of NAG to witness the unveiling of a new third-person shooter that goes by the name of *Spec Ops: The Line*. Believe me when I say that, despite my trepidation at the prospect of visiting uncharted lands alone, it was all totally worth it.

After spending more time on a plane than is humanly possible and booking myself into a hotel room that would be my home for the next few days, I was off to Yager Development to see a game that, up until that point, I'd heard very little of and had speculated about in hushed, secretive tones. The deceptively mundane building that houses Yager's (the developer of *Spec Ops: The Line*) development studio belies the amazing work that is being done within, and it's certainly going to be difficult to describe the excitement that I felt while watching the game in action for the first time - but I'm definitely going to try.

The press event started with a few of the folks from Yager and 2K Games revealing their vision for *The Line*.

Cory Davis, lead designer on the game, mentions something intriguing during his presentation: he states that their goal with *The Line* is to create the most provocative shooter of all time. Each person introducing the game displays immense passion and enthusiasm for the title that they're working on, something which is wonderfully inspiring to see. Following the presentation, we're shown a short (but terrific) gameplay demo (which I'll get to in a moment), after which we're taken on a desk-by-desk tour of Yager Development. A few of the developers detail the work they're doing, ranging from technological demonstrations to demos of the gameplay mechanics, giving us an in-depth look at their development process and a deeper look into the mechanics that the other journalists and I observed during the aforementioned demo. After this, we're shown the demo again with a newfound understanding of the game's inner workings. It was kind of like those show-and-tell days back at school, except that in this situation, I was the kid who brings a very small, very unremarkable rock to show, while the developers were like the kid who brings a model of Dubai and then replicates a sandstorm that tears the model city apart - making my miserable little rock seem even more pathetic than it already is.

Spec Ops: The Line takes place in Dubai, but not the Dubai that we're used to. The city has been overcome by a series of terrifyingly devastating sandstorms, forcing the inhabitants to evacuate



before things get too out of hand. As is usually the case with mass-evacuation plans, things don't quite pan out the way that they were expected to, and a bunch of unfortunate folks are forced to stay behind to weather this very sandy storm. US Army Colonel John Konrad, who is stationed in Dubai at the time, opts to stay behind to assist those who are left behind. Basically, he pulls the heroism card and is presumed to have perished with the rest of those unfortunate people. That is, until a weak distress signal originating from within Dubai is intercepted and a team of Delta Force operatives led by the player (who will be in control of a character known as Captain Walker – voiced by Nolan North from the *Uncharted* series) are sent in to search for and rescue Colonel Konrad. The thing is, Konrad, his band of loyal followers and the refugees in Dubai have been witness to the sort of horrors that would drive even the most level-headed person to the brink of insanity. This makes life difficult for Captain Walker and his team, because Colonel Konrad doesn't want to return to civilisation – he's become the mad king of his own personal (and grotesque) amusement park.

The *Line's* story is inspired by the novella *Heart of Darkness* (by Joseph Conrad – Colonel Konrad's name makes a bit more sense now, doesn't it?), which was also the inspiration for Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. If you want a general idea of what you can expect from the game's story, either go read the

novella or go watch the film. It'll point you in the right direction as to the overarching theme of *The Line*. It promises to be a tale that investigates the darkest depths of human nature. We're bound to see many examples of what could happen when someone is pushed to the edge and their survival instincts begin to kick in – or when the necessities of the mission override the horrific acts required to complete it. While the gameplay displayed in the demo was instantly recognisable with all its third-person gunplay, cover mechanics and plentiful explosions, it's the moral choices, the squad-based gameplay, the interesting and emotionally engaging story, and the city (together with the desert sands that are relentlessly attempting to reclaim it) that will set this game apart from similar titles.

Let's start with the moral choices and Captain Walker's squad. While the developers are adamant that this game is not an RPG, that doesn't mean that it can't share parallel themes with that genre. Every once in a while throughout your arduous journey to find Konrad, the player will witness or engage in acts of questionable morality. In the demo, an example was given wherein Walker and his squad stumble across a refugee camp. While none of these desperate civilians is armed, the player can still fire upon them. The game doesn't prompt this in any way. There's no pop-up that asks you to choose if you want to attack these people or not, nor is there a pop-up that details a penalty for either action. The

Virtual Tourism

The design of this digital Dubai isn't a one-to-one replica of the real-life city. The developers clarified that the city is more the inspiration for the game's setting. Dubai is known for the architectural wonders that spring from the earth it occupies, and this is what the developers are so keen to mimic. As such, any real-world building (like the Burj Al Arab or the Palm Jumeira – the latter of which is the palm tree-shaped, man-made island) isn't perfect recreations in the game – they're rather inspired by their real-life counterparts, with variations in the design of the game's buildings.

“THEIR GOAL WITH THE LINE IS TO CREATE THE MOST PROVOCATIVE SHOOTER OF ALL TIME.”

choice (or the reflex reaction that might accompany the surprise of seeing these people for the first time) is one that will be decided by the ethics of the player (in the case of a voluntary attack). One situation, for example, saw a civilian woman tear around a corner and tumble to the feet of Walker. As she frantically tries to crawl away from Walker (and his very large firearm), the player is subtly provided with a moment of moral choice: what will you do in this situation? While it's highly likely that most players will start off taking the moral high ground and being the good guy in this epic tale, we get the feeling that the player's principles will be challenged in such a way that the madness that overcame Colonel Konrad will begin to infect the player as well, to the point that the displays of indifference that were so repulsive before will at the very least be understood by the player. Think of Martin Sheen's journey through *Apocalypse Now* and his struggle to keep himself divorced from the madness surrounding him, and you should have a vague idea of what it'll be like to walk *The Line*.

These moral choices in turn affect the members of your squad. Your actions in the game will affect their feelings towards you, even going so far as to affect their responses towards the orders you give them. On that note, squad members can be given orders as you fight to overcome your enemies. You'll be yelling out to your squad constantly, ordering them to move, take cover behind objects and attack enemies of your choosing. While the obvious comparisons to *Gears of War*, *Uncharted* and *Army of Two* are guaranteed to be made in other previews you'll read, *The Line*'s emphasis on tactical gameplay actually reminded

me more of *Freedom Fighters*, to be honest - just with more sand. The AI is being coded with fun in mind, but it'll still make for a very dynamic and challenging experience. This is made possible by the fact that the designers have control over much of the AI's behaviour, while the engineers simply provide them with the tools necessary to do so.

Then there's the city itself, which provides a number of entertaining and appealing ways to alter your tactics and take on your enemies. The sandstorms that constantly threaten the city do more than just destroy stuff. You see, sand doesn't necessarily destroy the city - it conceals parts of it. This means that you might find yourself in situations where you'll be engaged in combat in an area that looks like a simple sandpit of destruction, until an errant RPG blast reveals that you're actually standing on the roof of a 20-story building, which you've now crashed into. This sort of thing is hauntingly awe-inspiring to see in action, and a lot of the technology behind the game is focused on delivering jaw-dropping effects and gameplay implications for the vast amounts of sand in the game. I know it sounds incredibly strange that sand could affect the game in any way, but it truly does. One example that we were shown by the developers showcased a heated firefight encased within a gigantic atrium surrounded by glass windows keeping a sea of sand at bay. The overwhelming odds that Walker and his men face in this particular situation prompt them to open fire - not on the enemies that lie below their perch on the balcony overlooking the atrium floor, but rather on the glass windows surrounding



“IT PROMISES TO BE A TALE THAT INVESTIGATES THE DARKEST DEPTHS OF HUMAN NATURE.”





“SPEC OPS: THE LINE TAKES PLACE IN DUBAI, BUT NOT THE DUBAI THAT WE’RE USED TO.”



them to unleash the sand upon the foes camping down below. Watching the sand as it snakes its way into the atrium to bury the enemies within is mesmerising. Other examples that we were shown are set in a similar situation to the one I touched on earlier. Picture a glass ceiling that has been concealed by a thin layer of sand – thick enough to hide the glass from eyes above, but thin enough to see the silhouettes of enemies from below. Knowing the location of your enemies when you’re below this glass and sand lets you shoot the glass to send your enemies plummeting into the building. Knowing that the ground you’re standing on isn’t truly solid when you’re up above also means that players can exploit the situation in their favour. But be careful, enemies (and stray bullets) can do the same thing.

To be completely honest, we still don’t know much about *Spec Ops: The Line*.

The developers were quite reluctant to reveal any of their closely guarded secrets pertaining to the game, but that doesn’t change the fact that what we learnt about the title points to a game that shows a ton of promise. The interesting game mechanics, the high production values and the passion shown by the developers (to name a few things) impressed us to no end. You’d do well to keep an eye on this title – we sure as hell will be.

I’d like to extend a special thanks to everybody who made the trip to see this wonderful-looking title possible. To David Halse (and everyone else at 2K Games), all the folks at Yager, everyone at Megarom and, of course, Michael and Lauren: thanks so much for making the trip to see *Spec Ops: The Line* a truly unforgettable experience. Also, thanks for the schnitzel and for introducing me to a million different variants of beer... **NAG**

D+ A SPEC OPS: THE LINE

NOT ONLY DID WE get a chance to tour Yager's studio and see *Spec Ops: The Line* in glorious action, but we were also given the opportunity to sit down with Francois Coulon, Executive Producer for the game, and Richard Pearsey, Narrative Designer for *The Line*. David Halse from publisher 2K Games also sat in on the interview, probably to ensure that my inquisitive nature didn't lead me to learn everything there is to know about the game, leaving 2K with nothing to tease us with (Dave, we need to know more about the game! :D). Despite having gone 72 hours without sleep, we braved the possibility of embarrassing ourselves thanks to our fatigued state, and had a nice little chat with a few of the people responsible for this third-person shooter.

NAG: We've been wondering about this since we first saw that *Spec Ops: The Line* logo appear on screen at the start of the gameplay demo. The subtitle (*The Line*) is very ambiguous... What exactly does it mean?

Richard Pearsey: "It's intentionally ambiguous, actually. What we're going for is a title that embodies a number of assets of the game. The player will bring certain things to the notion of the line. Obviously, *The Line* has certain meanings already. The Line between good and evil. The Line between right and wrong. The Line that you walk through life – where it takes you, the decisions you make. It's a lot like the novel by Cormac McCarthy – *The Road*. It's not

just a road. It is so much more. We're trying to tell a story here that has a number of different facets and is hopefully much more mature than you might find in your average shooter. We want the title to embody that."

NAG: Exactly how deep does the moral-choice system go?

RP: "Pretty deep."
[Laughter ensues all around]

NAG: Is that the anti-spoiler version?

RP: "That's the anti-spoiler version. The whole narrative to me is about, again, the line that you walk through life, the decisions that you make. Obviously, I can't give you a specific example of those decisions, because we're just teasing you guys with what's to come; but you can see even in the demo that there were situations where, if you were just playing through the game normally, would you do certain things at a certain point, and if you didn't, what would be the ramifications of that?"

NAG: One of the other developers mentioned that your squad mates will have different responses to your orders as you play through the game. Is that tied to the moral decisions you make?

RP: "My perspective on the squad – divorced from gameplay, because they do have a very specific gameplay function – is that these are people. I want them to feel like people, so if you do something, just like if I do something here, you're going to have

your own reaction to it."

NAG: Sort of like you'd see in a BioWare game?

RP: "Right – but we're not an RPG."

Francois Coulon: "What we're trying to do with the squad is to have them not only perform a powerful gameplay function, but also act as a powerful narrative tool. As a narrative tool, they're not just compelling you to complete the story and this odyssey, but they'll also be facing the same moral choices that you are. They'll have different reactions to this. Maybe one will say, 'Wait, this is not a war, we can't do that' or the other will say, 'Hey, maybe we should do something to help these people.'"

NAG: So the player will actually develop a relationship with the squad?

FC: "Absolutely!"

RP: "Absolutely! These are people you [Captain Walker] have worked with and these are people who are not afraid to disagree with you and let you know."

NAG: So, Dubai, huh? Also, lots of sand. Tell us more.

FC: "The cool thing about the city, about Dubai, and the way we treat it, is that there's this sand everywhere, but there's also this opulent city, so there's that contrast. The sand is almost a character."

NAG: It kind of reminds us of BioShock,



which has Rapture and lots of water, while The Line has Dubai and lots of sand, and the sand is such a major factor in the game as nature tries to reclaim Dubai for itself with these epic sandstorms.

FC: "These sand avalanches change the way you play the game. Instead of having exploding barrels and ammo piles that you can shoot, we've got sand avalanches that you can crash down on your enemies. The sand will affect the gameplay and the middle of the street, you're fighting, and a sandstorm is approaching – what do you do? Do you search for shelter, or do you try to hold your position and wait for the sandstorm to come (which would obscure your vision and hinder you). You won't be damaged by these sandstorms, but they will change the way the game is played. I just can't tell you exactly how right now for secrecy's sake. [Laughs] No two experiences in the game will play out the same way."

RP: "I would add to that that everything is integrated here. Gameplay, narrative and environment – everything informs everything else."

NAG: The sense of scale in that gameplay demo was amazing. You showed us

pictures that some of the developers took when they actually went to Dubai to do research for the game. How difficult is it to recreate Dubai's architectural wonders in the game?

FC: "If I ask you, 'What is Dubai?', what would you say? You'd probably say something about the Burj Al Arab and the Palm Jumeira. People's thoughts always drift towards Dubai's wonderful architectural aspect. So basically, what we actually do is just make crazy buildings that'll blend in with people's idea of Dubai. Our buildings and our in-game city aren't perfect replicas – they're inspired by those that exist in real-life Dubai. We've added our own touch to some of the buildings – like the Burj Al Arab."

RP: "The game draws inspiration from the idea of Dubai. How big, how opulent, how magnificent it all is. Then we create these buildings, and quite simply, we wipe them out." [Laughs]

NAG: Is there any facet of the game or the development that you guys are particularly proud of at this point?

FC: "From the development side, I'd say that I'm most proud of the team working on the game. As for the game, I'd say I'm proud of the whole experience we're

creating and the fact that we're taking the solid and engaging gameplay, the narrative (with its Heart of Darkness theme) and the awesome setting that's never been used before in a game, and merging them to create something unique."

RP: "I'm very happy with the backing that 2K Games is giving me. Nothing I've put forward has been too dark, too mature – they're letting us tell the story that we need to tell, to make this as good as it can be. That's very rare. I'm also proud of the fact that I'm with Yager, because I've not worked in an environment this open and here is to increase the quality of the game – there's no bulls**t."

FC: "Also, you have a fantastic and good-looking producer."

RP: [Sarcastically] "I do thank my stars every morning."

[More laughter]
David Halse: "From my perspective, and to elaborate on Richard's point, we at 2K are very proud of Spec Ops: The Line's narrative quality – it tells a darker, more mature story than other titles. We like that."
FC: "2K also isn't compromising quality by rushing us on the game. They're letting us say, 'The game will be ready when it's ready.'" **NAG**



IMPORTANT



MOTIVATION:

With game demos, patches, videos, DLC, toolsets, syndicated television shows and modifications getting bigger each month, we're always removing files we would have otherwise loved to see on the *NAG* DVD. So, the situation is as follows:

YOU GET TO VOTE FOR ONE OF THE TWO OPTIONS:

Vote Yes. We increase the price of *NAG* by R10 and add a second DVD; or

Vote No. We don't change anything.

SOME CLARIFICATION:

- The R10 is split down the middle with half of it going to our magazine-distribution company (yes we know, the world isn't fair) and the other half actually paying for the production of the DVD, the plastic sleeve, the paper insert, and finally the inserting of it into the plastic bag with *NAG* magazine.
- We will run requests on the *NAG* Website and via e-mail to ensure that we put what you want on the extra space.
- We are looking for a **very** strong indication of what everyone wants, so each and every vote counts and is very important to us. Make sure you have your say... Please ask to borrow a parent's cellphone if necessary.
- The SMS price is the cheapest we're allowed to have, and all SMS proceeds will go to charity (kids, animals or the environment).




VOTE!

FURTHER MOTIVATION


When we had all the various files collected and collated and collaborated and convened for this month's DVD, the total was somewhere over 21GB. We then removed all the rubbish, unknown garbage and ridiculous Japanese game trailers, and were left with around 18GB of decent content. This isn't even counting all the various game modifications (too many to list), maps (a nice *Left 4 Dead* map based on a zombie movie at 1GB), user-created videos (we had about six), large movie trailers like *Iron Man 2* and *Clash of the Titans*, artwork and screenshots from making up this issue of *NAG*, and so on and so forth. Each issue we're always reducing, removing and limiting.

Vote Yes. We increase the price of *NAG* by R10 and add a second DVD; or

Vote No. We don't change anything.



SMS YES OR NO TO 32541



SMSes charged at R1 each

Voting line closes on 24 February 2010

PRINCE OF PERSIA

THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

Most people think franchises are like a river that flows swift and sure in one direction...

"WE NEED A GAME for our upcoming movie based on *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*," scream the Walt Disney Pictures board members at the screen. They're in a videoconference call with Ubisoft, who shuffle about nervously, as the steam buffers on their end. "And we need it for May, so it can launch alongside Mr Bruckheimer's melodramatic Persian epic!"

In the corner of the Walt Disney boardroom, just out of sight of the Webcam, Jerry Bruckheimer has managed to steal all the LEGO bricks from everyone else in the building, and is building the biggest LEGO castle ever, while humming the theme from *Pirates of the Caribbean* to himself. The Ubisoft developers remain quiet, at least until the stream finishes buffering. "Well, what about this?" the Canadians ask. "Videogames based on movies are usually poo. What about we just make a direct sequel to *Sands of Time*?" The Walt Disney Pictures guys look at each other. "What, you mean, have the game-of-the-movie-of-the-game not have anything to do with the movie whatsoever? That's crazy!" In his corner, Bruckheimer is making little whooshing sounds as he adds even more melodrama to his LEGO castle by pretending to dramatically pan his invisible camera around the spires of his creation. There might have even been slow motion.

LIKE SANDS THROUGH THE HOURGLASS

While none of that was in any way true, it's probably sort of true. Did someone, during those fateful videoconference meetings, cite *The Chronicles of Riddick*:

Escape From Butcher Bay, perhaps the only game based on a movie that didn't require you to shoot yourself in the frontal lobe before enjoying it as an example? Perhaps. The stigma of movie-games is strong. Movie-games tend to be quickly slapped together on a cramped, insanely short production schedule so that they can be on shelf as the movie launches. Movie-games tend to follow the movie plot so religiously that there's little room for innovation, so developers have to use cookie-cutter gameplay. Is it a Disney or Pixar movie? The game will be a platformer. Is it a big-budget action movie? The game will be an action-adventure, like a cheap *God of War*. We've all been there, caught in the hopeless cycle of wishing with our gamer hearts of hearts that the game of the movie will be as fantastic as the movie itself, only to be disappointed with the game's cheapness, like the McDonald's toys that come out with the movie. We may as well call movie-games McGames.

Sidestepping being directly integrated or related to the subject-movie may be a good way to avoid the associated stigma, but the crazy time constraint on the production cycle remains. So what about *Forgotten Sands*? There may be a reprieve here, if only because if there's one thing Ubisoft has gotten very good at, it's making *Prince of Persia* games. *Sands of Time* was released in 2003; its sequel in 2004, and the sequel to that in 2005. Granted, the original *Sands of Time* and the newer 2008 "reboot," *Prince of Persia*, both had the more traditional three-year development cycle, but if *Forgotten Sands* is to be a sequel to *Sands of Time*, then the traditional one-and-a-half-year



"... new storyline, **new characters and new powers** over nature and time."

Why can't these guys
just use the floor like
everyone else

Before Sandy Time

Grand Vizier Jaffar has kidnapped your girlfriend and thrown you in a dungeon! You only have 60 minutes to escape, enact righteous vengeance on the evil Vizier (is there any other kind?) and smooch your lovely lady until she passes out. Things were much simpler for princes of Persia back in 1989, at least in the plot sense. The original *Prince of Persia* was more a puzzle than a platformer and fiendishly hard until you got the groove of it. Pressure plates triggered death falls, spikes from the floor impaled you if you did so much as sneeze at them, while random guards poked you to death with sharp swords until you figured out how to block.

The 1994 sequel, *Prince of Persia 2: The Shadow and the Flame*, was a worthy continuation, but mostly more of the same. *Prince of Persia 3D* was, depending on whom you asked, either terrible or very terrible, with random sprinklings of passable. If you never played *Prince of Persia*, the 2007 *Prince of Persia Classic* retro remake on XBLA and PSN is highly recommended.



This is SPARTA!



development schedule for a movie-game seems almost generous.

FORGOTTEN SANDS

Mum, said with a Canadian accent, is the word over at Ubisoft Montreal / Quebec. While they've been frank about the existence of *Forgotten Sands* and its place in the plot line as a "midquel" between *Sands of Time* and *Warrior Within*, little else has been revealed. It'll be released on every platform (like most McGames do), and it'll have a new storyline, new characters and new powers over nature and time. Wait... nature? Tell us more! Oh, that's right, you won't. Don't blame NAG, blame... Well, you know the rest.

The plot has the Prince visiting his brother's kingdom, following his action-adventure in Azad (that nasty business with the Vizier, daddy issues and unrequited love lost in the chrono-sands of time). Gasp, the Prince's brother's royal palace is under siege from a mighty army, who want to destroy it, for some reason. The Prince, in a desperate gamble, uses the Sand to save the kingdom. Cue epic adventure in which the Prince "learns to bear the mantle of true leadership, and discovers that great power often comes with a great cost," says Ubisoft.

GRANULAR FEATURES

The press release goes on to list "huge-scale multi-enemy combat," alongside "dizzying feats of acrobatic prowess in gigantic environments," all of which is, of

course, enhanced by the Prince's ability to control nature and time. Nature? What's with the nature thing? Don't you wish they'd told us more? We do.

Also promised is the "blockbuster experience," which will offer players "unforgettable set pieces made possible by the advanced technology offered by the award-winning Anvil engine." The Anvil engine is the one used in the most recent *Prince of Persia*, so that's a good thing. The press release actually says this (we're not making this up): "the Prince's abilities will be challenged like never before through the course of epic wow moments." Ever get the feeling that publishers, when trying to talk to "gamers" using terms like "epic wow moments" sound a little too much like that parent trying to be "hip" with the "youths" by using slang in lame ways? Could just be us.

The Prince will have "mastery over nature," says Ubisoft, going on to say nothing at all with "the Prince will discover that harnessing the forces of nature itself will prove to be a devastating companion to his ability to rewind time." C'mon Ubisoft! That's teasing! Will we be using our nature mastery to make it rain? Grow trees? Bend the very mountains to our will? Our imaginations fizz with potential, and will have to continue doing so until Ubisoft reveals more. At least one thing is for sure: it's not based on the movie, so you won't be playing as Jake Gyllenhaal's abs. Pity.



It sure looks pretty epic



Q&A

Why are you going back to the *Sands of Time* storyline?

"The Sands of Time universe is one that's a real favourite of the developers at Ubisoft, as well as fans. A great thing about the Prince of Persia series is that it allows us to tell stories in many different settings, with different Princes, while always retaining some core elements that fans expect. Returning to this series is something that we've had in production for quite a long time now, and we can't wait for everyone to get a look at what we have coming up."

Is there any link between *The Forgotten Sands* and the upcoming movie?

"The Forgotten Sands is not related to the film in any way, other than being based within the same overall universe from our own Sands of Time game series. The Prince from The Forgotten Sands is the same one that players controlled in Sands

of Time, Warrior Within and The Two Thrones, and its story is unrelated to the film. We are very happy that the movie will expose so many people to the universe that we love so much, and very happy at the amount of talent involved with it!"

Where does *The Forgotten Sands* fit within the Sands of Time timeline?

"The Forgotten Sands takes place in the span of time between the original Sands of Time and Warrior Within, soon after the Prince's adventure in Azad."

What is the story for *The Forgotten Sands*?

"Following his adventure in Azad, the Prince journeys to visit his brother, whose kingdom is under siege from an invading army. In defence of his people and kingdom, the Prince's brother is prepared to go to any lengths necessary. Through his brother's example and his own adventures, he will learn that the mantle of leadership comes at a severe price."

Can you tell us about some of the powers the Prince will have?

"The Prince will acquire powers that I can only refer to as mastery over nature. What

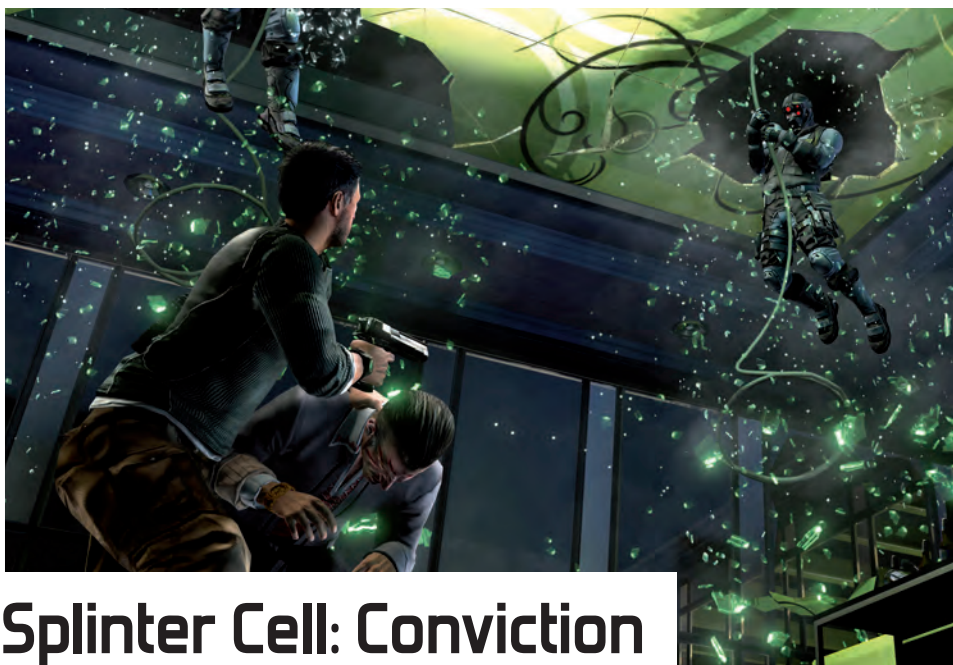
that exactly means is not something I can talk about at the moment, but I think it will be extremely exciting to fans when we reveal it in more detail."

How would you describe the visual style in *Forgotten Sands*?

"We are going for what we call Arabian Nights-inspired realism, in keeping with the other Sands of Time games. We have some very powerful technology at our disposal, which allows us to bring set pieces and memorable moments to life that would not have been possible before."

Could you explain what the combat will be like in the game?

"Given that we're designing the game with the Anvil engine, we have a tremendous advantage with the amount of NPCs we are capable of displaying on screen at once. The scale of the battles that you're going to be involved in when playing The Forgotten Sands is on a level that has not been seen in the series so far. Also, as was teased in our first trailer, we have some encounters in the game that will pit the Prince against the largest enemies he has ever come across, which we will be showing in more detail later on." **NAG**



Splinter Cell: Conviction

A completely new battleground

Genre → First-Person Shooter

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

TOM CLANCY'S NAME WAS once synonymous with spy thriller books and movies, but his move into the videogame sphere has certainly solidified his reputation among gamers. When his name comes up, gamers immediately think of solid tactical games, often with a slightly futuristic element (like in the case of *EndWar* and *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter*).

Of course, there are some franchises attached to Clancy's name that are more popular than others. Perhaps the most popular are the adventures of the irrepressible Sam Fisher, as detailed in the *Splinter Cell* series. It's no surprise that the latest release in the series, *Splinter Cell: Conviction* is getting a lot of attention. But most of that attention is arising from the fact that Ubisoft, the developers and publishers of the franchise, are taking a new approach... and not just to the game dynamics.

Historically, Sam Fisher has always been the good guy. A little rough around the edges, sure, but he has always fought for the good of all. His missions have always taken him deep into the hearts of enemy installations, where his high-tech equipment, excellent stealth skills and the support of a shadowy government organisation have always helped him overcome the odds.

This time around, Sam isn't quite so lucky. While investigating the death of his daughter, he learns that the agency he worked for, the Third Echelon, has betrayed him. Now Sam



is a fugitive from justice, without the backing of his former employers, and needing to rely on his wits more than ever before (for everything from sourcing equipment from underground sources to staying alive).

Ubisoft is being rather tight-lipped about the deeper details of the story – apparently following the “keep them guessing” route of pre-release hype – but a few snippets of information (other than the rough story) have been revealed. And, judging by what these snippets say, *Splinter Cell: Conviction* will be a rather different experience from what came before.

Two of the biggest changes, in

Opposing Forces

THIRD ECHOLON

Division Name: Third Echelon

Jurisdiction: United States / Worldwide

Location: Washington, D.C.

Operations: Information retrieval and analysis, information warfare, data analysis and mining, and Covert Ops

Status: Active

Third Echelon is a top-secret directorate tasked with spearheading the American information warfare initiative. Initially located at Fort Meade, Maryland, it has relocated its headquarters to within the Washington, D.C. city limits. Its current position within the American intelligence community is undetermined at this time. Previously valid information about its status as a sub directorate of a non-Homeland Security agency appears to no longer be valid. Third Echelon's primary goal



is to serve as the equivalent of Special Forces in the modern age of information warfare. Their most prominent initiative is the "Splinter Cell" programme. Initiated with a single operative, Sam Fisher, the Splinter Cell programme has been expanded under the direction of the organisation's new director, Tom Reed. The programme utilises lone operatives, called "Splinter Cells," to do field work in sensitive areas around the world. Unlike the CIA's field operatives, Splinter Cells have their identities kept secret even from other government agencies. Their work is the blackest of black ops, retrieving the most vital intelligence and acting on it in ways that other operatives cannot.

BLACK ARROW

Division Name: Black Arrow

Jurisdiction: Worldwide

Location: Turks and Caicos Islands / HQ in Panama

Operations: Security, training,

peacekeeping and combat services
Status: Active

Black Arrow is a private military company with global operations. The company offers security, training, peacekeeping and combat services. It was built largely on the wreckage of the disgraced PMC Displace International. More recently, it was purchased by Golden Locust LLC, an investment firm led by American businessman Lucius Galliard.

The firm was initially established in Panama City, Panama. It was incorporated the following year in the Turks and Caicos Islands, primarily for tax reasons. Black Arrow's first client was the government of the Comoros Islands, who hired the firm to defend against a coup attempt. The firm was also contracted to train and arm the country's military and constabulary. From there, Black Arrow took on increasingly larger contracts, working mainly in Africa, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and South America. Stated operational policy before the

purchase by Golden Locust was that operations inside the United States were off-limits. It is believed this was due to lingering issues from some of the company principals' history with Displace, though this has not been verified. Instead, the firm focused on security, peacekeeping, and training of local forces. At this time, Black Arrow is on retainer to six countries, including Burkina Faso, Haiti, Myanmar, and Suriname. It has also been identified as supporting armed insurrections with training, weapons supplies, and manpower in at least three locations, including Uganda and East Timor. Eight months ago, Black Arrow commenced a policy shift. It added to its portfolio corporate security and body-guarding operations, largely at the instigation of Galliard. Black Arrow has also begun aggressively courting US government contracts, both as support for ongoing foreign operations and within the United States itself.



This will allow an elevated tactical **approach to the game, allowing the player to create deeper strategies** than ever before.

Yes, I use
conditioner on my
beard too



terms of game dynamics, will stem from new systems that Ubisoft is implementing for the game. These are Last Known Position and Mark and Execute systems. Using Last Known Position, the player will be able to effectively flank and overpower enemies, using knowledge of positions and movements gathered from careful observation. This will allow an elevated tactical approach to the game, allowing the player to create deeper strategies than ever before.

The Mark and Execute system will allow the player to tag targets and deal with them quickly, adding pace and a new level of strategic

approach. This effective "weapon" is just one of many new dynamic elements added to the franchise for the upcoming title.

But what looks to set *Conviction* apart the most is the setting. Sam has been taken out of the dark and dingy enemy bases and thrust into the stark light of day, often amid crowds of innocent bystanders. This means that the player will have to take a new approach to missions, but will also have a powerful new tool at their disposal: blending into crowds. This idea will allow the player to move undetected through "living" crowds, mimicking their behaviour,

and even using them to cause distractions. This idea will even extend into competitive multiplayer games, in which players will look like ordinary members of the public. Their opponents will have to observe their movements and spot suspicious behaviour, while trying to remain inconspicuous themselves.

Further, the player will need to grow a network of underground contacts to get hold of equipment.

On paper, *Conviction* looks like a thrilling new instalment of the franchise, and one that will drive it in necessary new directions.

NAG
Walt Pretorius



Battlefield: Bad Company 2

It's going to be bad (but in a good way, the 'good' bad)

Genre → First-Person Shooter

PC 360 **PS3** Wii PS2 PSP DS

EA DICE'S LAUDED 2008 shooter *Battlefield: Bad Company* did well to strike a balance between the frenzied, arcade-style pace of the *Call of Duty* series, and the unforgiving harsh realism of *Operation Flashpoint*. Offering players an experience that required a degree of patience and strategy in order to succeed, but without ever becoming boring or tedious, the original *Bad Company* soon became a favourite, particularly for its fierce multiplayer mode.

Early 2010 will see the release of the game's highly anticipated follow-up, and although the developers have remained tight-lipped about the single player campaign and story mode, they've released a PS3 exclusive multiplayer beta that's currently tantalising FPS fans the world over. Set this time in the Americas, the game will reportedly once again pit the ragtag outfit of American soldiers that featured in the original, against Russia's

military might in a bid for supremacy over South America. The game's tone is set to be somewhat more sombre than that of the original, but any further details about the game's plot are still rather sketchy.

What can be said for certain, however, from the multiplayer beta, is that *Bad Company 2*'s online offering looks set to be one of the best to date, allowing up to 24 players to duke it out simultaneously using a variety of weapon kits, as well as all manner of vehicles. The beta sees players competing in a "Rush" mode match, similar to the last iteration's "Gold Rush" – a team of attacking players has a limited number of respawn "tickets", and have to destroy key structures in order to advance. The defending team, on the other hand, can respawn infinitely whilst trying to hold off the attacking team.

The map offered in the beta version is Arica Harbour, a vast desert map that encompasses abandoned highways, a run-down inner-city section, a narrow bridge spanning a large river, and the industrial dockyard from which the map takes its name. The first section of the

map offers little more than the partially destroyed shells of cars and buses for cover, as the attacking team presses down the main road towards their goal. The second section, set in the city itself, allows players to commandeer tanks, though the cramped city streets make it difficult to effectively manoeuvre them. Conversely, the numerous tall buildings offer an abundance of cover for resourceful snipers to pick off their foes. The bridge segment serves as a very effective chokepoint, forcing the attacking team to think of inventive ways of getting across the river to their ultimate target. Each segment of the map favours a different strategy, and the way in which they're so dynamically linked keeps the experience tense and unpredictable. The final version is certainly something to look forward to, especially if the rest of the maps are as well-designed as Arica Harbour.

Upon entering the beta, players are given a choice as to whether they wish to join up with a squad, or go it alone. Following that, you're given an option of four different kits for your character,



Bad Company 2 looks set to once again impress console and PC gamers alike, promising to be a riveting shooter that rewards tactical play without sinking into monotony.

namely Assault, Recon, Engineer, or Medic. Although each class has certain unique equipment items, the game nevertheless allows you to customise your character's inventory, allowing for far greater flexibility, as you can tailor your weapons to your own style of play. If you fancy lugging a rocket launcher around the battlefield, the Engineer remains your best bet. If you're more comfortable prowling around in a Ghillie suit and picking off foes from a distance, then you'll favour the Recon kit. The Assault class is, predictably, best suited for close-quarters combat, whilst the Medic plays a vital role in keeping the rest of his squad on their feet, which is particularly important given how swiftly death can creep up on you in *Bad Company 2*.

In addition to the standard array of character classes and weaponry, there's also a variety of vehicles on offer, including no small quantity of tanks, Hummers, and quad bikes. The multiplayer beta also lets players experiment with the new UAV, an

unmanned aircraft controlled via remote from a terminal, that allows players to reconnoitre the battlefield and even launch rockets at their targets. The final version will promise an even greater array of vehicles, among them helicopters and even aquatic vehicles, though these aren't available in the beta. What is evident, though, is that the developers have toned down the killing ability of tanks, so that they're no longer the indestructible machines of devastation that they were in the previous game. Tanks are now far more susceptible to enemy Engineers, and there are even some new gadgets available to make it easier to dispose of them. Given their heavy handling and the sometimes restrictive environments, this certainly bodes well for the game's multiplayer offering.

Another significant change is in the destructibility of the environment. Although it doesn't approach the Jenga-style physics of *Red Faction: Guerrilla*, most of the buildings that litter Arica Harbour are susceptible to gradual damage. Walls pummelled by gunshots

slowly chip away, and mortars can blast new openings in the sides of buildings, leaving players with new routes to their targets, and making snipers feel uncomfortably exposed.

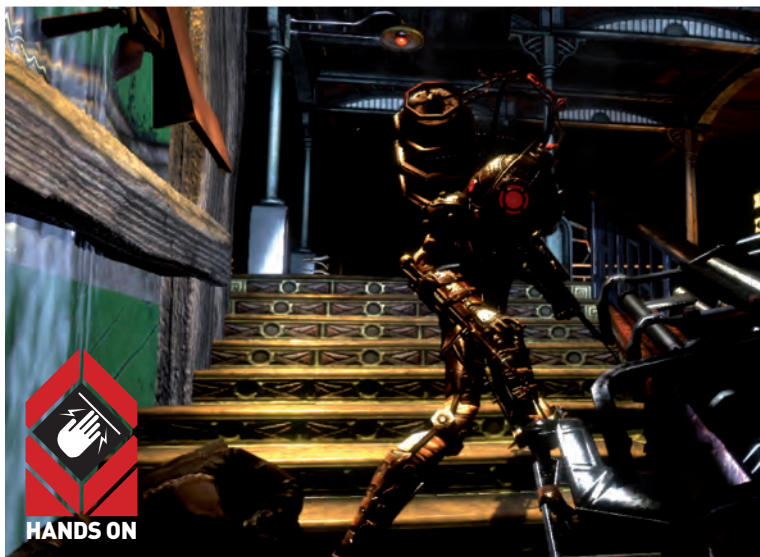
Visually, even though it's still a beta version, *Bad Company 2* looks stunning, with the harsh brightness of the desert landscape beautifully and convincingly recreated. Character animations are fluid, vehicles are lovingly detailed, and the gradual environmental damage that structures undergo is subtle but impressively realistic. There are still some rough edges to be ironed out with regards to draw-in distance and clipping, but there's plenty of time for those to be rectified before the game's final release.

Bad Company 2 looks set to once again impress console and PC gamers alike, promising to be a riveting shooter that rewards tactical play without sinking into monotony. If the beta is anything to go by, *Bad Company 2* is going to turn no shortage of heads when it reaches its release in the first quarter of 2010.

NAG
Adam Liebman

Developer → 2K Marin/Australia, Digital Extremes (multiplayer)
Release Date → February 2010

Publisher → 2K Games Web → www.bioshockgame.com



BioShock 2

Who's your daddy?

Genre → First-Person Action RPG

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

WHEN BIOSHOCK WAS RELEASED, it launched to a public concerned with its ability to live up to its spiritual successor – the sci-fi, cyberpunk-themed FPS RPG *System Shock*. Thankfully, to everyone's relief, the game did live up to its heritage, introduced the world to the art deco underwater city of Rapture, and managed to be pretty creepy all the while. It was a success, but developing a sequel to such a game is a much greater challenge – now you have two games to live up to. Of course, the easiest way to achieve this is to play it safe, stick to what people know and enjoy, and simply refine a few things here and there. That's pretty much what 2K Australia/Marin (note: no 2K Boston/Irrational Games) did with *BioShock 2* – they kept it really safe.

The preview code that we had access to is pretty much the finished deal, but the very serious letter attached to it urged us not to write a review. While I doubt much will change from this to the gold master, we'll nonetheless respect their wishes, and I'll instead regale you with lots of paragraphs filled with all the nitty-gritty info you're no doubt dying to read.

WHO? WHAT? WHERE?

The story that drives *BioShock 2* takes place in the '70s – ten years after the events of the first title. You play as a new character, who awakens from a coma; a Big Daddy, confused and, if it weren't for the massive drill attached to his arm, probably scared as well. Tenenbaum, from the first game, soon gets in touch



with you and in typical 'Shock style, explains the situation in little bits of puzzle-like pieces. Through a series of audio logs found scattered throughout the city of Rapture, you'll soon piece together the story. I don't want to ruin anything for you, so I'll stop there. But know this: you're no ordinary Big Daddy; you have a free will.

THE OLD WITH THE NEW

While the majority of gameplay mechanics in *BioShock 2* are straight out of the first title, many elements have been refined and trimmed down to make for a quicker, more brutal playing experience that seldom gives you a chance to rest. As a special Big Daddy, you have access to Plasmids – the powerful genetic modifications that

Happy New Year!

A multiplayer mode has finally made its way into *BioShock*, and, as expected, it has a twist. The basic principle is the same as most other action FPSes: kill other people in a variety of game modes while ranking up a character to unlock new weapons, Plasmids and Gene Tonics. Here, there's actually a bit of a story. It takes place on New Year's Eve, 1958. If you're not aware, that fateful night is when Atlas's Splicers descended on The Kashmir Restaurant, marking the start of Civil War between Atlas and Ryan. You choose a Splicer with their own back-story, and can unlock their audio logs as you progress with that character. There's also a bit of customisation. Currently, we only know of a few different hats and melee weapons, but we're pretty sure that more choices will come later. The multiplayer segment includes a number of game modes:

Survival of the Fittest: No frills, no fuss free-for-all. Go forth and kill

Civil War: Team Deathmatch

Capture the Sister: Each team takes turns to attack and defend. The defending side gets a couple of Big Daddies (a Rosie, so no Plasmids for you) for their trouble, and must try to stop the opposing team from stealing their Little Sister.

Turf War: A number of capture points exist on the battlefield. If you've played *Call of Duty*, this is the same as Domination.

ADAM Grab: Possibly the most interesting. It combines the idea of the Mutant mode in *Unreal Tournament* with none of the benefits. All players are after a single Little Sister, who's somewhere on the map. Pick her up, and she starts screaming (which will alert players within earshot), and you're unable to use any weapons other than Plasmids.

Team ADAM Grab: As above, except that you're on teams.

Last Splicer Standing: A team-based endurance battle. One life only.



We tried to come up with a funny caption, but it's just a guy diving. It's not that funny



“Big Sisters will come after you once you’ve rescued/harvested **a certain number of Little Sisters. When they come, they will hunt you down** until either you or they are dead.”

give you almost magic-like abilities, including fireball-tossing, electro-bolt flinging and a *Prey*-inspired scouting ability. You can also use a variety of weapons, in addition to the rivet gun and drill arm found on typical Big Daddies. A double-barrelled shotgun, spear gun, remote hacking tool and machine gun will complement your arsenal to ensure you’re equipped to deal with any threat.

As a sort-of Splicer yourself, ADAM and EVE also play an important role in your development. Little Sisters are still the major source of ADAM, but the mechanic for harvesting is considerably different. Since Little Sisters are engineered to trust all Big Daddies, what’s stopping you from killing an existing keeper and simply stealing his charge? Taking down one of these hulks

is, thankfully, still as challenging as it’s ever been, but the reward is much greater now: you’ll earn yourself a Little Sister that can lead you to specific corpses that are filled with ADAM. When you set her down to go to work, you had better be prepared. A number of Splicers descend on both of you, and will only give up once all the ADAM has been harvested and the Little Sister is returned safely on your back, where she rides. This mini “survival mode” adds great depth to the regular gameplay, and ensures that, while the rewards are there, nothing comes without plenty of hard work.

You’ve probably already heard of the Big Sisters. In short, they’re terrifying. They’re agile, tough as nails and can also use Plasmids. Big Sisters will come

after you once you’ve rescued/harvested a certain number of Little Sisters. When they come, they will hunt you down until either you or they are dead. Usually, it’s you, but the Vita Chambers are thankfully still in operation (and, mysteriously, still work with you).

The hacking system has been given a much-needed overhaul as well, and is now a simple “stop the needle in the right place” mini-game, but it doesn’t pause the game. Trying to hack a vending machine while dodging incoming rockets is no easy task. The areas that you visit are also, in general, more open than in the previous game. There’s a lot to do in any area, and exploration is almost always a rewarding experience. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows



Aliens vs. Predator

What's that noise?

Genre → First-Person Shooter / Action

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS



REBELLION'S *ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR*, released back in 1999 for the PC and Mac, was simply a great game. It had everything: Xenomorphs, kick-ass alien hunters with badass technology/weaponry, and the pants-pooing scariness of a survival-horror game. It was tough as frikkin' nails too, with a very limited save-game mechanic and enemies that gave you no quarter and allowed for no relief from your terror – and that was just the marine campaign. Gamers were also given the opportunity to rock the game world as an Alien and a Predator from their respective film franchises. Nothing can compare to the first time those squishy, gooey face-huggers ruined your day by latching onto your in-game face, while your real face twisted into its own breed of agony and despair at the thought of having to replay your last half hour of game time. Those were good times and the game's sequel, *Aliens versus Predator 2* (released in 2001), provided gamers with more Aliens, more stuff to play with, and a million new, more gruesome ways to die. That sequel, however, was developed by Monolith Productions, and for this third title the reins have been handed back to Rebellion so they can have another go at making us s**t our pants – this time even harder.

This new game will once again give you control over a member of each of the game's three warring factions: the pansy marines, the stealthy Predators and the Alien killing machines. Each race plays very differently and will require a unique approach to the situations that the game throws at you. This time around, however,

Rebellion has opted to integrate your time with each race into one overarching, coherent storyline, rather than having three separate campaigns (with separate storylines) for each. We were given some preview code that let us take each race for a very short (but very sweet) test drive, and this is what we have to report:

STARSHIP POOPERS

The bread-and-butter race of the game, the marine campaign plays like your typical FPS, but with a bit of survival horror thrown in for good measure. We wouldn't have it any other way, and the anxiety that we felt while slowly sneaking through claustrophobic corridors as a marine immediately took our minds back to the days of slowly sneaking through claustrophobic corridors as a marine in the first *AvP*. The marine is once again kitted out with his trusty motion tracker that'll let you know when enemies are nearby by beeping and generally going nuts with activity. The motion tracker's beeps get louder and more intense the closer enemies are, and a small blue dot on the tracker will periodically (it pulses every half a second or so to update the tracker) show you the location of whatever the hell is stalking you – but only in a 180-degree cone in front of you, so you'll have to turn around to track enemies behind you. Just like the first game (and the *Alien(s)* series of films), this motion tracker is less likely to help you kill enemies and more likely to have you freak out and blow yourself up with a grenade every time you hear it beep or see one of those blue dots. It's a great tension-

building tool – as if things weren't tense enough with you facing off against the titular Aliens and Predators. Thankfully, the marine has access to a limitless supply of flares (only one flare can be used at a time, though, so you'll need to wait for the last one you tossed to burn out before you can throw another one), a flashlight and some really big, very iconic guns like the Pulse Rifle to shoot at things 'til they lay bleeding in a pile of acidic gunk. Each weapon has an alternate fire (like the Pulse Rifle's grenade launcher) and the marine has access to a basic melee attack, as well as the ability to block melee attacks for when desperation sets in.

SMILE PRETTY, YOU UGLY ****

The Aliens are the all-out killers of *AvP*. They're also probably the most disorientating race to play, because

'Multipreyer'

The build we received didn't have any, but here's what we know so far. All three races will be playable, which should make for some pretty amazing confrontations (much like in *AvP 2*'s multiplayer mode). The modes announced thus far are Deathmatch (18-player mayhem), Infestation (like *Mutant*, one player is an Alien while a squad of marines hunts that player down. Kill him/her and you become the Alien) and Predator Hunt (short and sweet – one Alien player is hunted by a group of Predators intent on racking up the most possible kills). Ready for a dash of even more awesome? There'll also be a cooperative horde mode, in which four marines attempt to survive as long as possible against relentless waves of attacking Aliens. Hell, yeah!



they're able to traverse walls, ceilings and pretty much anything they lay their eyes on at puke-inducing speeds. They're super fast, super agile and have lots (and lots) of teeth. Please, no photography: they hate that. Heavy (slow) and light (fast) attacks make up their melee abilities. Pretty much every part of a Xenomorph's body is a weapon of some sort, so tails whip about, teeth gnash violently, claws flourish menacingly and that horrible little second face/mouth/tongue thing gnaws on whatever's left over when the screaming stops. It's a violent life the Alien leads, always making for fun times. Enemies can be grabbed to perform epic (and ultra-violent) finishing moves, and you can sneak up on foes to kill them all stealth-like (you'll be able to hide in shadows to aid you in this). Basically, as the Alien you'll be sprinting on ceilings, biting stuff and scaring hapless marines with your ferocious tomfoolery.

PRIDE AND PREDATORS

Predators are the sneaky hunters and sport a bunch of cool tech to back up their insatiable desire to hunt the Serpents (Aliens). As it was in the earlier games, the Predator can play adult peek-a-boo by using his cloak to effectively become invisible and sneak up on unwary prey. He's got a pair of retractable wrist blades on each arm for his basic light and heavy melee attacks (he can also block enemy

attacks), while his numerous vision modes let him prioritise targets by switching to modes better at detecting each of the game's three races (switching to heat vision, for example, will render Aliens and other Predators almost invisible, while humans will glow a nice, blood-red hue that Predators obviously can't resist). The Predator can jump great heights to quickly get to vantage points that'll allow him to devise hunting strategies in relative peace. Then there's the shoulder-mounted plasma cannon, which can quickly fire free-aimed plasma shots to slowly warm up cups of cold coffee, or can be charged to lock on to said cup and fire a single, more powerful plasma blast to instantly warm your cold coffee (or defrost and cook chicken immediately). Some of the Predator's weaponry (like the plasma cannon and mines) drains his armour's energy when used, which you'll have to recharge by finding energy sources if you plan to keep your coffee perpetually warm. Also – trophy kills!

THE WHOLE STORY

Our time with the preview code was short, but quite enjoyable. We still don't quite know what to expect from the game, but it's looking good so far and it definitely feels like *AvP*, so that's a good sign. We're looking forward to spending some more time with it – and so should you. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

"... the reins have been handed back to **Rebellion** so they can have another go at making us s**t our pants – this time even harder."

Many manly men multiplayer

Up to sixteen players can make a rumpus in one of many multiplayer maps, sliced from sections of the city. Jump pads keep things mobile across the large distances, while rankings are based on kill points: ten for a basic, 20 for a headshot, more for melee, 100 for ground-stomping right on the bugger's head. Game types range from the usual deathmatch to more exotic fare like Rocket Tag, in which whoever grabs a golden icon has to hold it while everyone else gets homing rocket launchers.



Crackdown 2

Skills for kills, agent. Skills for kills.

Genre → Third-Person Shooter/Sandbox

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

RELEASED IN 2007, A full two years before *PROTOTYPE* and *inFAMOUS*, *Crackdown* reigned supreme in its genre. Its blend of open-world, sandbox gameplay and kinetic action, wrapped up in a graphic-novel art direction, was an instant success. Yet, even with sales of over 1.5 million units, Microsoft didn't seem interested in a sequel. As such, Realtime Worlds started working on *All Points Bulletin* instead, a PC-only and conceptually ambitious open-world-shooter MMO.

RUFFIAN GAMES?

Billy Thomson, original *GTA* team member and lead designer on *Crackdown*, decided he'd rather work on a sequel. He co-founded Ruffian Games, and became its creative director. "I can only speak personally, but I spent a lot of time on the first game. I really wanted to make a sequel, and to be honest, I wasn't really happy with what I was doing at Realtime Worlds... I wanted to continue making console games."

Thomson met with Gary Liddon and Gareth Noyce from Xen Group, a trouble-shooting outfit Microsoft sends to aid its first-party studios, and the three of them founded Ruffian Games. They pitched *Crackdown 2* to Microsoft, and a short media-drama ensued because Realtime World's chief David Jones said he was "miffed" at the whole thing.

PACIFIC CITY: THE SEQUEL

It's ten years later in Pacific City, and genetically modified mutants of murderous inclination wander the streets in the thousands. Survivors of the mutant



holocaust have banded together into a quasi-terrorist outfit called The Cell. As the first agent the discredited Agency programme gets back on line (it was, after all, the Agency that unleashed the mutant strain on the city), it's the player's prerogative to clean up the familiar-looking city streets. Even though the city has been completely rebuilt for the sequel, the road layout is the same, while veterans will recognise some districts. Much of the city has been reclaimed by vegetation, while the rest has been shored up or stripped down - scaffolding and material re-purposed into makeshift protection.

MEN ON A MISSION

Cleaning up the streets was the main reason for the player's existence in the first game, but in the sequel, it's been

made more brutal, more difficult and spiced up with more variety. The day/night cycle that was just eye candy the first time round, now sits in the centre of the game's structure. When night falls, thousands of freaks swarm out of the city's sewers, and you have to seek refuge atop buildings, although even there the player isn't safe. There's also a bigger emphasis on the storyline, as producer James Cope explains.

"One of the problems with the first game was that we had a lot of story elements, but we never told anyone, so the player was left a little lost. What we're trying to do now is actually show how the world has evolved, to set up a context for the player. We're trying to tell the story through lots of mechanisms - the way the world looks, the way the player is greeted. Players will find and do things



Yeah... We're not sure either...



within the plot of *Crackdown 2* that help reinforce what's going on. There's a big story to work out."

Crackdown's mission structure was repetitive: players only really had to locate and kill 21 bosses and the credits rolled. Now, missions are split into staged objectives, each with a specific narrative purpose. Raiding an oil refinery to divert much-needed fuel to the Agency can range from starting off as an assault, moving into siege, transportation and protection missions, all with the signature *Crackdown* twist. If you have to transport something across town, you can chuck it in the back of a car, or you can glue it to something using the new mag grenade, though Ruffian is coy to reveal too much. "It's difficult to talk about the arc of the mission structure," says Cope, "because it does lead very obviously to the end game and we don't want to give that away. There's a big three-way battle between the freaks, The Cell and the Agency and that reaches a culmination that the player gets to build - the missions all fit into that."

FOUR PLAY

Four-player cooperative will be included, and you won't even have to stick together. Unlike the first game, it'll be possible for all four players to undertake different missions: one player could be doing an early mission task on one side of the city, while others are busting through harder later missions. "There's still that element

of 'It's my world - I'll do what I want in it'," Cope says. "That's important to us in terms of the game being a sandbox - or, as we prefer, a toy box - experience. We make the toys and the players get to mess around with them."

HARDER, BETTER, FASTER, STRONGER

The character-upgrade system from *Crackdown* has been retained and refined. The five skills - Agility, Driving, Strength, Explosives and Firearms - are levelled up by performing relevant acts and collecting experience orbs. In the original game, the system was enjoyable but flawed, with certain skills being too easy to level and others too hard. This time it'll be easier, though Ruffian isn't saying much. "We have rewards that are given to the player, based on their progression through the key skills," explains Thompson. "In the first game you basically got every item you would ever get in the first few minutes of play - apart from a few weapons and vehicles. This time, as you level up, you gain access to more fun firearms from the Agency - explosives and vehicles work along the same line. And levelling up strength and agility opens up whole new abilities."

Another new feature is the ability to use anything you can pick up in the environment as a melee weapon, and hand-to-hand combat has been refined to include combos of punches, kicks and

There's still that element of **"It's my world - I'll do what I want in it."**

throws (but all still on one button). Some new weapons detailed include the UV shotgun that sends out a pulse of energy that blasts enemies/vehicles into the sky, and the magnetic grenade that lets you bind anything metal to any other metal object in the vicinity.

YONDER COMES THE BIG DOG - RUN PUPPY RUN!

All these new toys exist because the player is no longer the biggest dog in the yard. As Cope explains, "In *Crackdown* you were always the most powerful thing in the world and that was fun, but the problem was that you were never threatened; without a threat you had periods where there was nothing to do. This was particularly evident when you went up on the rooftops - no AI could follow you. Now you have powerful AI adversaries - the freaks can chase you across rooftops. There's no sense of safety anymore. The agent is equalled." **NAG**

Miktar Dracon



R.U.S.E.

War just got impersonal again

Genre→ Real-time Strategy

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

MODERN STRATEGY GAMES TEND to follow an increasingly-popular trend of focusing the action closer to the field. Every soldier, tank, and aircraft is a special little person that the player should take care of – do so, and you'll be rewarded with more experienced units and their no-doubt grateful families. *R.U.S.E.* takes the exact opposite approach. But it goes even further than the early RTSes that allowed us to send countless troops to their deaths without flinching; it pulls the player so far out of the horror of war, that they really do feel like a commander, safe in their war-room on the other side of the planet. In fact, the massively-zoomable view (think *Supreme Commander* "massive"), when zoomed out to its fullest, places you within such a war-room, to complement the illusion admirably.

The basic principles in *R.U.S.E.* are much the same as in any RTS: construct buildings to deploy units, capture and collect from supply facilities, and try to do all of that better than the other guy. The trick here is that there's no traditional fog of war: all of your truly-trustworthy intelligence about enemy unit positions, numbers, and make-up comes from your units in the field. If they can't see the enemy, you can't see the enemy. This makes reconnaissance incredibly important; you'll need to ensure you're always scouting ahead of your strongest units with jeeps, small squads of infantry, and light aircraft. Likewise, subterfuge plays a big role as well, and this is where the game draws its name. During a single game, a Ruse counter is constantly counting away. Every time it ticks over, you gain one Ruse. Your opponent is in exactly

the same situation. You can then choose from the ten Ruse "cards" available to change the course of battle in subtle ways; it's the combination of Ruses, and where and when you use them, that really impacts the war, however. This system is combined with the very potent ability to construct buildings anywhere you can get an engineering truck to, even right outside the enemy base. Drop down a Radio Silence Ruse to ensure your troops are invisible to everything but direct sight, send in the truck to do the construction, lay down a Camouflage Net Ruse to cover up your newly-constructed tank yard, and churn out a couple dozen Panzers right at your neighbour's doorstep.

A number of interesting and, we guess (hey, we're no experts), "historically accurate" features also make their way into *R.U.S.E.* Line-of-sight is important for all units, with only a handful having the ability to fire blindly. Movement is also something to pay attention to: smaller vehicles and infantry can move freely through all but the roughest terrain, while large vehicles, like most tanks, can't even enter a forest. Additionally, many wheeled units gain movement bonuses from travelling on roads. Towns, bridges, and forests also play important roles in defending vital zones in the map, as lighter units, like infantry, can lay in wait for enemies to pass through, invisible until the last second before they attack.

During our brief time with the multiplayer beta, it became clear that, despite its lack of many modern-day RTS mainstays, *R.U.S.E.* is still a thoroughly tactical game that should appeal to any fan of the genre. More than that, it takes us back to the days of playing tabletop war games at the local nerd store, and that makes us happy. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows



ALIENS vs PREDATOR™



available february 2010
WWW.SEGA.FR/AVP

18+
www.pegi.info

20th
CENTURY
FOX



PLAYSTATION 3



Games for Windows



XBOX 360



REBELLION

SEGA

www.sega.fr

Aliens vs. Predator™ & © 2009 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. All rights reserved. Aliens vs. Predator game software, excluding Twentieth Century Fox elements © 2009 SEGA. SEGA and the SEGA logo are registered trademarks or trade marks of SEGA Corporation. Technology © 2009 Rebellion. "D", "PLAYSTATION" and "PS3" are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Windows, le bouton Démarrer de Windows Vista, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE et les logos Xbox sont des marques du groupe Microsoft, et Games for Windows et le logo du bouton Démarrer de Windows Vista sont utilisés sous licence de Microsoft.

www.sega.fr

WWW.SEGA.FR/AVP

NuMetro
interactive

Prince of Persia[®]

THE FORGOTTEN SANDS[™]





NAG

Poster sponsored by NAG magazine

Subscribe to NAG

Subscribe now and get a year's worth of **NAG** for only R420.

Five lucky subscribers will win a copy of *Star Trek Online Gold Edition* and a *Star Trek* (2-disc Special Edition) Blue-ray, sponsored by Megarom and Look & Listen.

Renewals also qualify.

megarom
interactive

Look & Listen
DVD • CD • GAMES — MP3 • ACCESSORIES
For the Fans

SEND MY COPY OF NAG TO:



Full name: _____
Postal address: _____
E-mail: _____
Tel: _____

PAYMENT METHOD (PLEASE CIRCLE): Bank deposit / Cheque / Credit Card / Postal Order

Credit card number: _____
Expiry date: _____
CCV number: _____
Signature: _____

- Order by fax: (011) 704-4120
- Order by e-mail: subs@tidemedia.co.za
- Order by post: Tide Media, P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158

Bank account details for direct deposits –

Tide Media, Nedbank Fourways, Account number: 1684112125, Branch code 168405

Once you have paid the money into our account, fax a copy of the subscription form plus the bank deposit slip to (011) 704-4120. No deposit slip = no subscription. Please make cheques and postal orders out to Tide Media and then post the completed form to NAG Subscription Department, P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

***Please Note:** No refunds will be issued for this subscription offer.

NAG

Kingpin: Life of Crime

NEW AGE GAMING, SEPTEMBER 1999, issue 6, page 44. A younger Michael James reviews *Kingpin: Life of Crime*. Finding it to be a damn fine game, with a few exceptions, he awards it a healthy score of 81. When I recently read through that review for the sake of legal plagiarism opportunities nostalgia, two thoughts dawned on me: 1) We had a lot of copy per page back then, and 2) Not much has changed in over a decade of *Kingpin*'s life. It's still just as fun (and challenging) to play now as it was then, but the same nagging little irritations are just as nagging. In case you've never heard of this game, don't know what *New Age Gaming* is, or refuse to read introductory paragraphs, let's have a look at what exactly we're talking about...

Kingpin: Life of Crime, is a first-person shooter based on the id Tech 2 engine. It was released in 1999, two years after *Quake II*, and caused quite a bit of a stir when Interplay braved the onslaught of angry mothers everywhere by publishing it just months after the Columbine High School massacre. You see, *Kingpin* is about violence. It's not just violent, but everything about the story, gameplay mechanics, and enhancements to the engine revolves around killing, maiming, beating, and otherwise hurting people (and the occasional animal; hippies may now cast their looks of scorn). You begin the game as some random steroid-pumped street thug who's had the misfortune of being beaten up by two other steroid-pumped street thugs. Through a few monologues and cut scenes, you discover that your character is upset about this beating, and wants to

beat up the guy who ordered the beating, and then beat up that guy's boss. That's pretty much it. If I missed any depth to the story, it's probably because all of the voice actors mumble, and I only turned on subtitles about half an hour into the game. I blame Cypress Hill – who were responsible for much of the background music, as well as a few bits of NPC voice talent here and there.

During your travels through the dark and impressively detailed (for its time), semi-linear game world, you'll encounter many colourful street gangster types, including fellow steroid-pumped thugs, hookers, hawkers, and even shopkeepers. Some of the NPCs will have simple item-retrieval quests for you, some may be looking to sell you something, some may be willing to follow you and provide a backup piece should the need arise. Even to this day, Xatrix manages to impress with the level of detail that they packed into *Kingpin*: wounded enemies will retreat to safety, leaving a trail of blood behind; NPCs will get edgy if you approach them without holstering your firearm; weapons can be upgraded; and the view will bob and sway in a manner not too far from modern games.

It really is a pity that Interplay collapsed shortly after this title's release, and took Xatrix with it (which was closed on the day of *Kingpin*'s release), because it's clear that this was a team that knew how to perform wonders with existing technology, and wasn't afraid to experiment with controversial, and interesting, ideas and settings. *Kingpin* is more than just another decade-old FPS, it's an important piece of gaming history. **NAG**



What We're Playing

Here are the top 20 games we're currently playing in the NAG office

#	GAME NAME
1	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 MP
2	Assassin's Creed II
3	Borderlands
4	Mass Effect 2
5	Trials HD DLC
6	Batman: Arkham Asylum
7	Bayonetta
8	Bionic Commando
9	Borderlands: Zombie Island of Dr. Ned
10	Darksiders
11	Dragon Age: Origins
12	FIFA 10
13	Gears of War 2
14	James Cameron's Avatar: The Game
15	Left 4 Dead 2
16	Machinarium
17	Mass Effect
18	Torchlight
19	Tropico 3
20	New ideas...

Distributors

Apex Interactive	[011] 796-5040
Asbis	[011] 848-7000
ASUS SA	[011] 783-5450
Axiz	[011] 237-7000
Comstar	[011] 314-5812
Comstek	0860 600 557
Core Group	[087] 940-3000
Corex	[011] 655-8800
Cosmic Comics	[011] 476-9640
Drive Control Corporation	[011] 201-8927
EA South Africa	[011] 516-8300
Esquire	0861 700 000
Eurobyte	[011] 234-0142
Foxcomp	[011] 912-6300
Frontosa	[011] 466-0038
Incredible Connection	0860 011 700
Intel Corporation	[011] 806-4530
Legend Memory	[011] 314-0817
Logitech SA	[011] 656-3375
Look & Listen	[011] 467-3717
Megarom	[011] 361-4800
Microsoft	0860 225 567
MiDigital	[011] 723-1800
MobileG	[021] 982-4606
Net4 Solutions	[082] 490-1510
Nology	[012] 657-1317
Nu Metro Interactive	[011] 340-3000
Pinnacle	[011] 265-3000
Rectron	[011] 203-1000
Sahara	[011] 542-1000
Samsung	0860 726 7864
Sapphire ATI	[044] 384-0225
Sonic Informed	[011] 314-5800
Ster Kinekor Entertainment	[011] 445-7700
Syntech	0861 274 244
TVR	[011] 807-1390

If your company isn't listed here, phone NAG on [011] 704-2679

Web Scores

How do our scores compare to everyone else's? We've provided scores from Metacritic and Game Rankings for reference.

NAG // Metacritic // Game Rankings

JAMES CAMERON'S AVATAR: THE GAME



PC

72
61
57

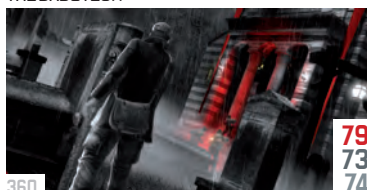
BAYONETTA



360

86
93
91

THE SABOTEUR



360

79
73
74

TROPICO 3



PC

86
79
80

MAJESTY 2



PC

72
73
75

ROGUE WARRIOR



PC

35
25
18

SAW



PS3

48
59
59

TV Series

For the Fans

Shop Online at
www.lookandlisten.co.za



Terminator
The Sarah Connor
Chronicles - Season 2
(6 DVD)
Available from 8 February

R429⁹⁹



Legend Of The
Seeker - Season 1
(6 DVD)
Available from 1 February

R429⁹⁹



It's Always
Sunny In Philadelphia
Seasons 1 & 2
(3 DVD)
Available from 12 February

R249⁹⁹



Brothers And
Sisters - Season 3
(6 DVD)
Available from 8 February

R429⁹⁹



Private Practice
Season 2
(6 DVD)
Available from 8 February

R429⁹⁹



The Unit
Season 4 - Final Season
(6 DVD)
Available from 24 February

R299⁹⁹

Look & Listen
For the Fans

NAG's preferred DVD retailer.

DVD • CD • GAMES • MP3 • ACCESSORIES

For product information contact us on: 011 467 3717
or shop online at www.lookandlisten.co.za

While stocks last. E&OE. Prices and availability subject to
change at the discretion of the supplier.

Look & Listen
For the Fans

This is an early boss battle that is frikkin' epic. The boss, Fortitudo, looks kind of like a Hydra with only two heads and a face where its body should be. Makes for crazy times when Bayonetta starts tossing him around the screen.



Bayonetta

No other game makes the simple act of pulling a lever sexy

Genre→ Action

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

BAYONETTA IS A BIT of a strange beast. Every time I play it, I'm torn between the desire to lick the screen (let's face it, Bayonetta's pretty... um... pretty) and my wanting to tear my eyes out in frustration. I guess that's typical of a game of this nature. It's a game birthed from the mind of *Devil May Cry* and *Viewtiful Joe* creator Hideki Kamiya, and it shows: both in terms of its gameplay and the references made in *Bayonetta* to the aforementioned titles. It's a game that forces you to love it with its stylish design, its beautiful (and ferociously brutal) lead character, its upbeat nature and its immensely enjoyable gameplay. At the same time, you're likely to hate the game for the way it makes you feel like a complete n00b when it hands you your ass in a thousand different increasingly colourful ways.

The story runs a little something like this: 500 years ago, two factions known as the Lumen Sages (light) and the Umbran Witches (dark) watched over the world to ensure that things were kept in order. Some stuff went down, things went awry, and war broke out for some reason or another. The Umbran Witches won the war (and probably got a trophy for being awesome and having bewbs), but they didn't quite win the hearts of the people of the world. Hatred and superstition led to widespread persecution of the Umbran Witches, to the point where almost every one of them was wiped out. Five hundred years have passed, and an Umbran Witch named Bayonetta awakens from her centuries-long slumber in a coffin sealed and dumped in a lake. Naturally, she's left with no memory of anything that went



down in her past. The angels of Paradiso aren't happy with this and they descend (pompously) from their McDonald's in the sky to mess up the hairdo that Bayonetta spent hours straightening, spraying and teasing to get just right (and to cover her naughty bits). More stuff goes down, Bayonetta punches things and meets some new people, and we (the players) are dumped straight into the middle of all this, and are tasked with helping Bayonetta uncover her past and kill things 'til the credits roll. Or something like that. To tell you the truth, *Bayonetta's* story, although it is incredibly interesting and engaging, isn't told very well. There's something about a Trinity of Realities (Inferno, Paradiso and Purgatorio – hell, heaven and purgatory) going on in

there; there's a dude named Luka and there's a lady riding a motorcycle on walls... or something. By the end of it, you'll understand the story, but you'll feel like it was told to you by someone who continually digresses from the point every two minutes while you listen intently. None of this is really a problem, because *Bayonetta* shines in almost every other area. That, and the game really doesn't take itself very seriously. It's pretty common for the game's many cut-scenes to be interspersed with bouts of momentary, glorious madness. These moments are often hilarious (such as a few in which Bayonetta will make an epic dash to reach a lollipop – yes, a lollipop – in the middle of a heated battle), and it's nice to see that the developers clearly had

fun making this game.

Bayonetta plays very much like *Devil May Cry*. When fights break out, they're filled with non-stop action, slow-motion ass kicking (otherwise known as Witch Time) and lots of bullets. Bayonetta's got guns – big ones – strapped to her heels: that should paint a pretty picture of just how insane the action can get in this game. Thankfully, the easy-to-learn controls make getting a handle on all this madness a painless affair. The combat gets as complex as you want it to be. You can win most battles in the game by simply mashing buttons until everything around you dies in spectacular fashion, or you can take the serious route and learn every combo, study the damage caused by each individual attack, and finish entire action sequences without letting Bayonetta's boots touch the ground. Witch Time (which I mentioned earlier) can be activated by dodging enemy attacks at precisely the right moment, which will kick-start a slow-mo sequence and allow you to take your time pulling off some of the more intense combos. In the middle of all the madness of the combat sequences, you'll be jumping, punching, kicking, shooting and break dancing (true story) while trying to build up huge combos.

String together enough combos, and you can unleash some of Bayonetta's more powerful abilities such as Torture Attacks, which are essentially finishing moves that result in some ridiculous (and wonderful) effects like summoning a guillotine to the battlefield, which Bayonetta happily uses on a single enemy, or an iron maiden, which Bayonetta kicks enemies into. The game's five difficulty settings do a good job of catering to everyone, from novices (the lowest difficulty setting will let you play the game using a single button) to action-game veterans. The game is incredibly challenging on the higher difficulty settings, so expect to do plenty of cussing in frustration if you plan to tackle them, especially if you attempt to get the highest possible rating for each chapter or battle. The intense action sequences are occasionally given a break when the game throws light platforming and puzzle gameplay at you.

New weapons, moves, items and accessories (which augment Bayonetta's abilities) can be purchased between missions (and within missions when you find certain portals) by exchanging Halos (the game's currency) for merchandise from a character named Rodin (a demonic, slightly creepy bartender). He'll



Hair-based attacks FTW. Not only does Bayonetta's hair double as her clothes, it's also a pretty potent weapon.



also take a trip down to Inferno to get the materials needed to forge new weapons if you bring him LPs that you retrieve throughout the game world.

This review certainly doesn't cover everything there is to say about *Bayonetta*, but I've run out of space. The game is ludicrous, marvellous, punishing and rewarding, all at the same time. It is, quite simply, a fantastic action game. It has a great visual style (actually, the whole game is just incredibly stylish), the combat makes for an awesome visual spectacle, the boss battles are some of the coolest you'll ever see in a videogame, and the controls are solid. The only real issue I have with the game is its annoyingly sluggish camera, which never seems to keep up with the (admittedly hectic) on-screen madness. If you love games like *Devil May Cry*, then *Bayonetta* will captivate you. If you love gorgeous virtual women with guns strapped to their heels, *Bayonetta* will captivate you more. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

The Score

1
None
None
www.pegi.info

Plus
+ Great controls
+ Stylish
+ Awe-inspiring combat

Minus
- Camera sucks

Bottom Line

Bayonetta is as hot as the feisty Umbran Witch herself. Fans of *Devil May Cry* in particular will go nuts for this game.



AVAILABLE AT
Look & Listen
FOR THE FANS



You really think I can grow my beard as soft and silky as yours? Do you use conditioner?



The Saboteur

In for a penny... In for a f****n' pound...

Genre→ Sandbox Third-Person Action/Adventure

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

OUR STORY BEGINS IN France, shortly before World War II. Sean Devlin, an Irishman with a mysterious past (naturally – what videogame is complete with a protagonist without one?), is enjoying living his life as the driver for the Morini Racing Team. The people Sean works with are more than just colleagues – they're close friends, the type that Sean would gladly put his life on the line for. Beautiful women, hard liquor, fast cars, and thrilling bar fights are commonplace in the Irish rogue's life. He's about to make a name for himself by taking on the best drivers in Europe in a race which will catapult him into the loose-women-filled limelight if he steps out of his team's pride and joy (a racecar affectionately dubbed the Aurora) victorious. It's not all sunshine and roses, though: the threat of imminent war looms over the heads of people everywhere. Sean is indifferent towards the whole "OMG war!" thing, until the race that was supposed to be his big break sparks a series of events that will help ignite the war and rob Sean of those closest to him.

Vengeance for the atrocities committed against Sean's friends becomes the driving force behind this third-person sandbox title set during World War II. Now, I can hear you groaning at the thought of another game set during World War II, and possibly also at the thought of yet another open-world action game, but hear me out, because *The Saboteur* takes these two elements and ties them into a game that is unique in a number of ways. Sean's not out to off Hitler and end the war: he only wants revenge against



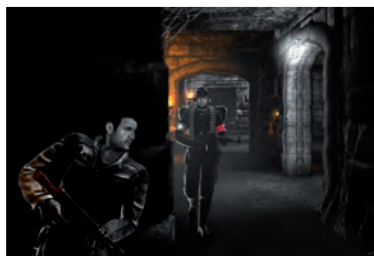
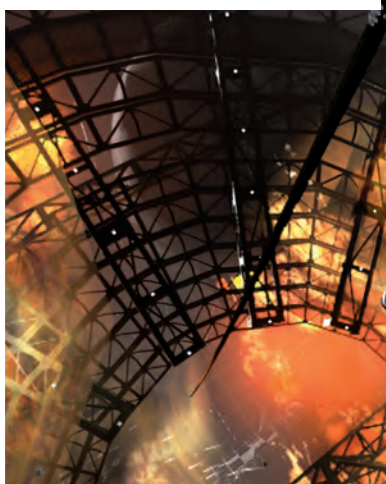
a certain Nazi officer who stole all of his candy. In order to do so, Sean has to kill a lot of other Nazis, which pleases the French Resistance (as well as the British forces working to stall the Nazi advance through Europe). Realising that their goals are not dissimilar, Sean and the aforementioned factions work together to reclaim Paris from its oppressors, one area at a time.

The Saboteur borrows heavily from open-world games that came before it. The influence of the likes of *Grand Theft Auto*, *Assassin's Creed*, and others, can clearly be seen in this game's underlying gameplay mechanics. It plays out in familiar fashion – Sean is free to move around a scaled-down, Nazi-occupied version of Paris that is filled with virtual recreations of a number of renowned landmarks like the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower. To get around quickly, Sean can "borrow" vehicles from kind Parisians, or

liberate them from the Nazis.

Then there's Sean's ability to scale just about anything he can lay his eyes on. He's able to clamber his way up the sides of most of the buildings in the city (and those which dot the landscape surrounding Paris, which Sean is also free to explore). Engaging in suspicious activities like trespassing in restricted areas, carrying a weapon, or killing Nazis, could raise the Nazi's alarm level. This alarm level, much like the one in *GTA*, gradually increases as Sean continues to piss off the Nazis, up to a maximum of alarm level five, at which point enemies will start sending the big guns, like zeppelins and fighter planes, to end Sean's reign of beautiful destruction. The Nazi occupation obviously makes life slightly difficult for Sean in other ways, because the Nazis have set up checkpoints at various locations around the city, and while Sean is still able to

Using a zipline as an escape route from a burning zeppelin is always a good idea...



bust through these checkpoints, this will ignite a Nazi temper tantrum that could potentially bring half the occupying forces down on Sean's head.

Sound like something you've played before? Don't judge too hastily, though, because *The Saboteur* sets itself apart from other sandbox titles in a number of cool ways. The visual and audio styles, for example, reflect the morale of the people of Paris, a facet of the game which is not only wonderfully implemented, but also makes for a stunning game world. In areas of Paris where the Nazi occupation is heaviest, the game is stripped of colour, resulting in a black and white measurement of your progress in suppressing the Nazi threat. Rain, thunderclouds, and sombre music also represent the Parisian despair when in these locations. On the flip side, when you're in areas in which you've managed to lighten the Nazi presence, everything is washed with colour, light, and upbeat music. Upping morale in an area involves stuff like attacking Nazi strongholds or sabotaging Nazi weapon emplacements, the success of which will trigger a scene showing the return of colour to the area. The stark contrast between liberated and oppressed zones can be clearly seen from vantage points around the city, giving the game a brilliantly stylish look and feel.

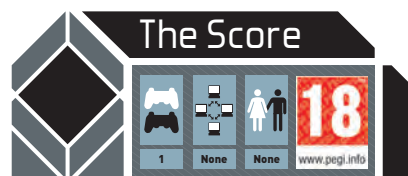
Then there's the actual gameplay, which, while it still has the usual story missions, optional missions (both of which you'll acquire from numerous contacts around Paris), and random stuff like races and duck-hunting mini games, has a number of other intriguing distractions to engage in. Free-play targets, for example, are high-value targets like sniper nests, fuel depots, and propaganda towers that Sean can sabotage (i.e. plant dynamite on and watch the fireworks) for a contraband (the game's currency, used to buy weapons and equipment from black market dealers, or to repair vehicles that can be collected at garages scattered throughout the game) reward. Once destroyed, these targets are gone

for good, making missions and escaping from Nazi pursuit easier. The Resistance can be called in to aid Sean, and the equipment and health of Resistance members can be upgraded to increase their effectiveness. Nazi pursuit can also be fought off by travelling to fight-back zones, where the Resistance will help Sean to kill Nazis until they realise that chasing this Irishman just isn't worth the amount of spilled blood required, and give up. The game's stealth elements feature as heavily as you want them to, and Sean is able to don disguises to infiltrate Nazi territory or to evade pursuit. The stealth elements, while they do work adequately, tend to be a bit anal and not worth the trouble, so 99% of the time you'll just dive straight in guns blazing.

Other than the stealth elements, the game is far from problem free. The animations are awkward and unrefined, and the platforming bits (like climbing buildings) are too cumbersome to get any real joy out of. The game is bogged down by a few glitches and the whole experience is lacking in polish, perhaps due to a rushed development cycle. Despite all of this, however, the developers have created a game that

boasts a terrific blending of open-world games and WWII shooters. It's actually a lot of fun to play. Sean Devlin's straightforward and brash nature never fails to put a smile on my face, while the game itself has an interesting storyline, is action packed, and looks and sounds great. There's more to *The Saboteur* than I have space to detail here, but I will say that it's definitely worth a try, and I'm hoping that someday we'll see a sequel that irons out the kinks.

NAG
Dane Remendes



Plus

- + Stylish visuals/audio
- + Cows + Dynamite = Spectacular gibs

Minus

- Annoying stealth elements
- Dodgy animation
- Lacks polish

Bottom Line

Despite its problems, *The Saboteur* is a lot of fun. It's a good game, but it could have been much, much better.



AVAILABLE AT
Look & Listen
FOCUS PARS



Tropico 3

Making managing a banana republic fun

Genre→ Simulation/Management

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

TROPICO 3 IS A fantastic management game. I thought I'd just get that out of the way early. Disregard all of the stuff you may have witnessed and played around with in *Tropico 2: Pirate Cove*, because that's what the third title in the series does. The game casts you as El Presidente, ruler of your own tropical paradise, and you're pretty much told to run the show as you see fit. The game offers up a few different ways to get down to the business of dictating/ruling justly/toying with the feelings of the little people on your island paradise. There's the campaign mode, which takes you through a number of different missions with objectives like "export X amount of coffee before the nukes hit". Then there's the sandbox mode, which lets you select a pre-built avatar (or create your own), choose an island (or have one randomly generated), and set a number of different gameplay parameters that'll let you customise your sandbox world's features, altering the experience each time you load up a new sandbox game. Finally, there are the challenges, which are objective-based scenarios you can create yourself, or you can download those crafted by others online.

Starting out in *Tropico 3* (if you've never played any of the earlier titles) can be daunting at first, because the game has a steep learning curve. This is mostly due to the game's dodgy tutorial, which really doesn't explain much, so expect to spend much of your initial time with the game constantly referring to the manual (which actually provides a wealth of information).



Shacks - not enough housing and high unemployment means that these eyesores will pop up all over your island paradise.

Tropico 3 places heavy emphasis on constructing the right buildings in the right places, keeping your island's inhabitants (known as Tropicans) happy (or too scared to protest), and maintaining a steady flow of cash into your coffers by improving your nation's economy.

Construction in *Tropico 3* is a fairly simple affair. Right-clicking brings up the construction menu, which lets you choose from a number of buildings divided into various categories such as housing, entertainment, industry, and infrastructure. You'll get to know each building's purpose as you progress and

your people begin demanding new and better services. They may be happy with a small church to start off with, but eventually the religious faction will beg you to build a cathedral, and eventually they'll refuse to share their candy with you if you don't. The people living on your island are separated into a number of different factions, each of which requires a bit of special attention to keep its members on your side. Nationalists, environmentalists, militarists, intellectuals: these are a few of the factions that you'll be trying to please in order to get their vote at the next election (should you choose

Economic crisis

To avoid one of these, you've got to get your economy on in *Tropico 3*. Making money in this game can be done in a few ways. Exporting goods from your island can be very profitable, whether those goods come from farms, mines, oil wells, or factories. The further up the production chain you go, the more money you're likely to make from exporting goods (i.e. selling furniture or cigars will make you more money than if you sold wood and tobacco). Tourism is a great way to make money, if you're willing to put up with the whining of the tourists – and if you've got the starting capital to actually get a tourism operation up and running. You'll also be able to get financial aid from the superpowers (USA and USSR) if you please them enough. Other, less obvious ways of earning some cash on the side, comes by way of things like overcharging your citizens for rent, or passing an edict that will allow the USA or USSR to perform nuclear tests on Tropic soil. Sure, it'll piss off the environmentalist faction, but who cares about them when there's money to be made?



Randomise my ride

Every once in a while in *Tropico 3*, random events could occur that'll put a damper on all your management fun. Earthquakes, hurricanes, and the like can all tear your carefully placed buildings to shreds, while other events, like economic crises, can hurt your exports faster than you can say, "the Russians are coming!"



to hold elections, that is). Aside from the factions, each individual Tropic must also be pleased by providing them with food, housing, and some way to amuse themselves in the form of entertainment buildings. A new, very important building in *Tropico 3* is the garage, which is quite useful when you want your people to get around the island quicker. Then there's the economic aspect of construction: building farms and mines earns you money. The key to all of this, as the real-estate agents say, is all about location, and you'll need to construct buildings in the right places if you hope to get the most you can out of them. Most buildings in the game can also have various adjustments made to them, such as by setting the wages of the people working at a particular building, the rent for housing structures, or going more in-depth by setting things like the quality of service provided by a building (upkeep increases when quality does). Certain buildings can also be upgraded, like

the cigar factory, which can have skylights installed to increase the workers' job quality.

In addition to pleasing the factions and the people they're made up of, you'll be trying to please the USA (capitalists) and the USSR (communists) by changing the way you manage your fledgling nation. Anger these superpowers by falling into debt or showing too much support for the other guys, and they might even invade your little paradise.

There's a bunch of other stuff to do in *Tropico 3* – too much to list here. Come election time, you can compose election speeches to address issues and please factions you may not have much favour with. You can pass edicts that'll change the way your nation operates, such as by passing edicts that provide retirees and students with cash, ensuring that even though they don't earn a wage, they'll still have money to pay rent and entertain themselves, which'll stop them from protesting and erecting shacks that prove to be horrible eyesores on your lovely island.

There's a ton of stuff to do in this game, and many different options and ways to play the game. It all results in a management game that is wonderfully complex (but not intimidatingly so) and compelling, rewarding, and above all, fun. It's definitely not for everyone, but we can't get enough of it.

NAG
Dane Remendes



Plus

- + Great visuals
- + Compelling aspects
- + Addictive and fun

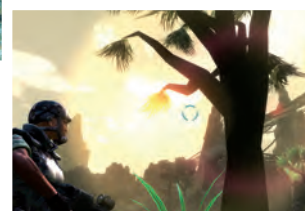
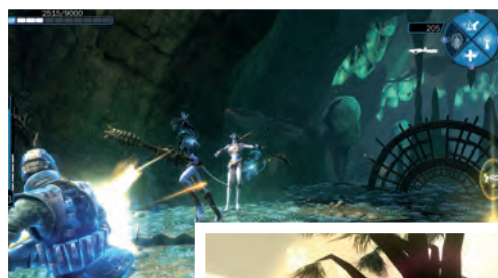
Bottom Line

Tropico 3 is a deep, rich and rewarding management sim. If you're into this sort of thing, you can't go wrong here.

AVAILABLE AT
Look & Listen
FOR THE FANS



You are not in Kansas any more... You are on Pandora, ladies and gentlemen. Respect that fact every second of every day.



James Cameron's Avatar: The Game

Pandora: the most hostile (yet gorgeous!) environment known to man!

Genre→Third-person action

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

BY NOW, IF YOU haven't seen the movie *James Cameron's Avatar*... what rock [Don't you mean what tree? Ed] have you been living under? Put simply: go see it! In 3D. You could go watch it in 2D, or watch a torrent version – but in either case, you'd be robbing yourself of the main point of the experience – the movie is specifically designed to be enjoyed stereoscopically, so watching it any other way would be only a partial experience.

THE VISUAL EXPERIENCE

This game, too, is intended to be enjoyed in 3D if possible, though Ubisoft recognises the fact that, at the moment, only a minority of players will have access to this technology, and so it works just fine in 2D as well. The graphics are of a very high standard, indeed. The lush jungles of Pandora (the planet where the action takes place) are so dense with vegetation, and this is depicted in such detail, that it is not unreasonable to compare *Avatar* to *Crysis* in this regard. Furthermore, just as in the movie, the jungle is transformed at night – many of the plants are luminescent, and there are many areas where the moss on the ground lights up when stepped on.

The vehicle, creature, and character models are also pretty detailed. Here, the creatures and vehicles enjoy the best visuals. The animation of the various local fauna is particularly fluid, with the skin stretching over the skeleton, while vehicles are highly detailed and feel suitably mechanical. The RDA soldiers ("human marines", if you will), have a lot of secondary movement on them (for



example, ammo pouches and the like, which bounce as the characters move around), lending them a ponderous sense to weight and presence. Facial animations, however, seem a little bland: the characters' faces constantly carry a sort of vacant half-smile. An annoying element is the fact that the character model appears very off-centre (to the left), which makes aiming and moving a bit tricky until you get used to it.

Textures have been designed so that they perform well even when playing on a 3D display (which generally requires a bit more oomph from the graphics hardware), and yet still manage to look very detailed. Also, *Avatar* makes use of Ubisoft's fire propagation technology that was introduced in *Far Cry 2*.

SOUNDS GOOD?

In terms of audio, there is nothing remarkable here. The sounds are pretty

much what you'd expect. There's a fair amount of dialogue, and all of this is voice-acted and accompanied by subtitles. The music is quite cinematic in its feel, and picks up and dies down according to the action. In fact, this makes it useful as a sort of early warning system: if the music picks up, start looking around for enemies!

LIGHTS, CAMERA... ACTION!

The basic gameplay is over-the-shoulder third-person action, with very rudimentary role-playing elements – your character gains experience as you progress through the game, and this unlocks various weapons, armour, and skills. At any given time, you can have four weapons equipped, along with one armour suit, and you can have access to up to four skills at any given time. This is pretty much the extent of the "role-playing" element – deciding which several skills and weapons you will not have

access to. There are quite a few weapons to choose from, to suit various play styles. Playing as RDA, for example, you get to choose between dual-wielded pistols, which are quite weak but pack infinite ammo, rifles, assault rifles, machine guns, nail guns, grenade launchers, and flamethrowers. On the Na'vi (the indigenous inhabitants of Pandora) side, you get to use a variety of melee weapons, bows, and even a captured RDA machine gun – though getting ammo for this last one can be tricky, as it's a weapon you carry over from your RDA days if you defect.

Speaking of defecting... The first hour or two of the game has you playing as both RDA and a Na'vi avatar, but eventually you get to a decision point. At this point, you choose your allegiance – either to keep advancing the RDA agenda, or to side with the locals and defend them from RDA's depredations.

Killing things, of course, is the main way to earn experience points, but there are also "sector challenges". These are, essentially, almost like side-quests, except that they tend to be more formulaic. For example, one that you will always have is "lift the fog" – explore the map, in other words. Once you have explored the whole of an area map, the challenge is completed and you get a bunch of XP. Another is to cull a particular type of local wildlife, which will vary according to the map.

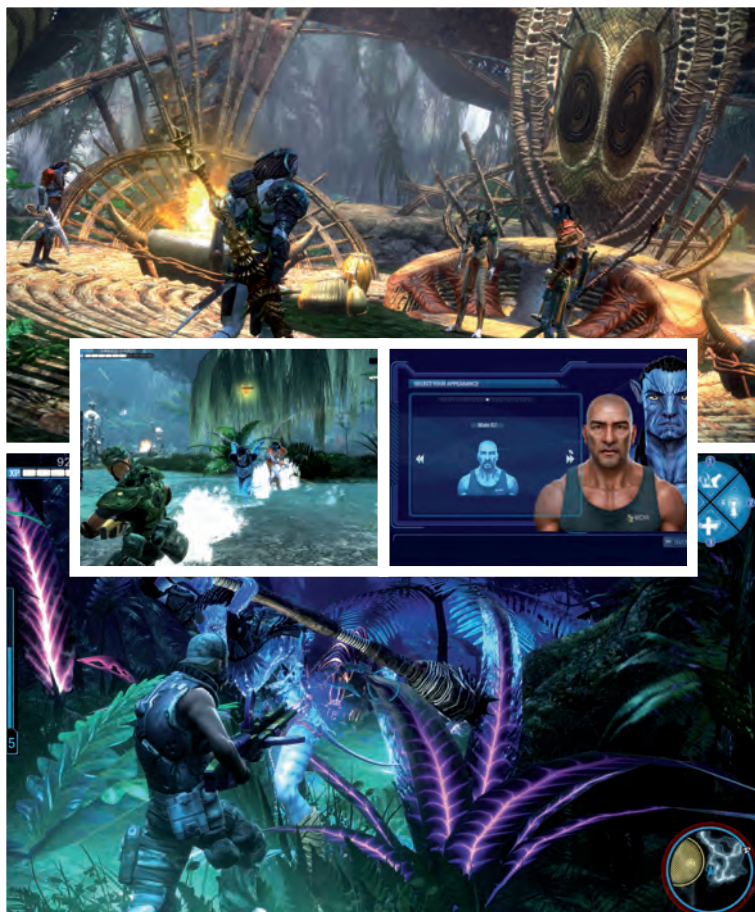
Gameplay is, to be honest, pretty

linear. You basically find yourself entering an area and then carrying out a series of objectives which are pretty much all alike. Most areas end with a boss fight, and then the next is unlocked. While you play an area, it is almost free-form, or at least it seems that way. You can clear an area more or less in whatever order you like, and you can feel free to not complete some of the sector challenges, but it is only once you have completed all the necessary objectives that the next area becomes available.

An interesting element to this game is the conquest mode. The mode is accessed from specific places on the map, which are the same places that you can use to teleport within a sector. It consists of a globe map of Pandora, and is in essence a *Risk*-style turn-based strategy game. Experience points earned in-game provide credits that can be used in conquest to purchase troops and bases. You use these to conquer territories. Some territories, in turn, provide bonuses to your character in the main game, such as damage upgrades, for as long as you hold them. Conquest mode helps to break up the unfortunate monotony of the main game.

THE LICENSED CONNECTION

Games based on movie licences and the like are notorious for being generally quite bad, and for often missing the point of the original. *Avatar*, happily, is not a bad game (it is, in fact, quite a good one,



overall), though it definitely suffers from the second malady: it doesn't really convey the sense of the movie. Whereas in the movie [SPOILER AHEAD!] the fighting only starts near the end and doesn't last long, this game is pretty much all about RDA vs Na'vi in a way that doesn't happen in the movie. Also, if you play as RDA, it ends up becoming a rather mindless grind of shooting everything in sight, though playing as Na'vi the tone is somewhat closer to that of the movie. Overall, it is quite strange that this game doesn't really nail down the feel of the movie, as James Cameron was quite actively involved in its development, in a guiding and consulting capacity. **NAG**
Alex Jelagin

The Score

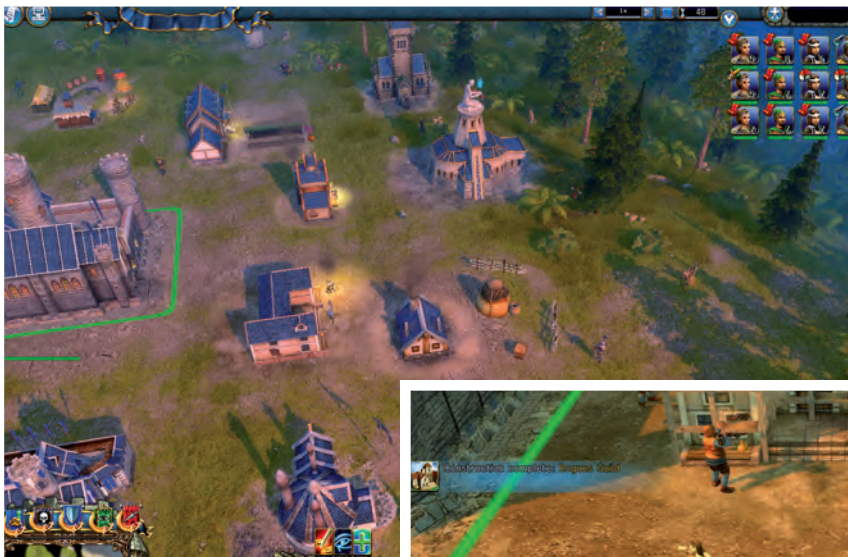
1	16	2	12
			www.pegi.info

- | | |
|--|--|
| Plus
+ Great graphics
+ Large world | Minus
- Monotonous gameplay
- Little emotional investment |
|--|--|

Bottom Line
One of the better film to game adaptations out there. Stunning visuals, but a somewhat monotonous game dynamic.



AVAILABLE AT
Look & Listen
For the Fans



Majesty 2

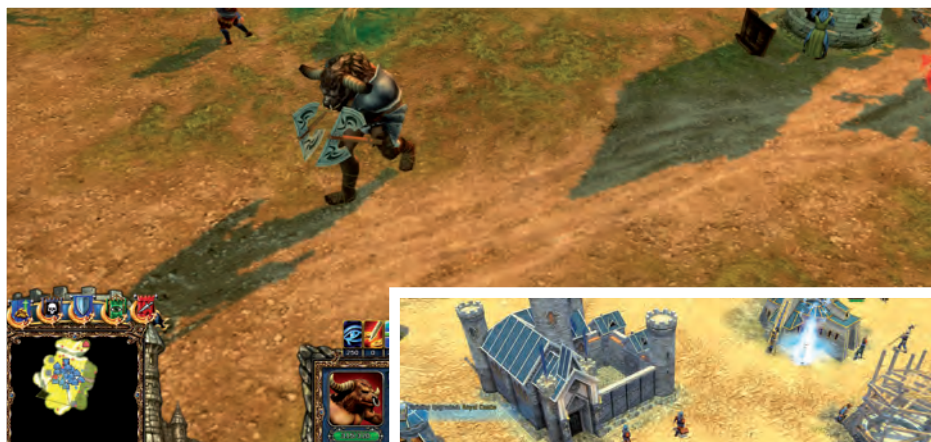
Well, it's almost a simulation

Genre→ Strategy

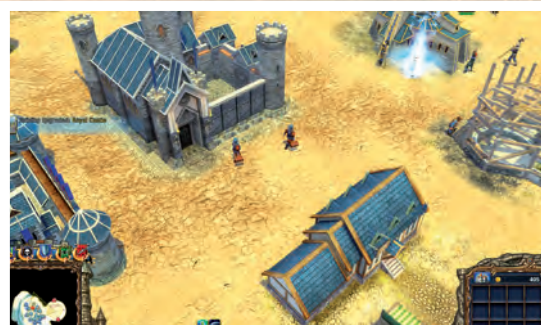
PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

500 YEARS HAVE PASSED since the unification of Arдания. Dozens of powerful, wealthy, and courageous kings have ruled the land, each doing their bit to safeguard the world and rid it of any evil presence that still lingered. As the years grew on, however, each ruler had fewer and fewer foes to vanquish, or great deeds to perform. Until, eventually, there was simply nothing left to slay when King Leonard assumed the throne. Bereft of a challenge fitting a king of so great a lineage, Leonard came up with a great idea: he'll conjure up one of Arдания's foulest demons, slay it, and live out his days safe in the knowledge that he was as great as his forefathers. Except, the demon killed Leonard, usurped the throne, and killed off every other heir that attempted to take back what was theirs by right. Bar one last chap – you. Now, armed with a couple of gold coins, a handful of followers, and a sarcastic advisor that sounds like Sean Connery, you must prove yourself to the people as the last heir, vanquish the evil that now plagues Arдания and, eventually, find a way to put your royal derriere on its rightful throne.

Majesty 2, like the title preceding it, is a self-proclaimed fantasy sim that's easy on the simulation, and heavy on the fantasy. As a sovereign of few followers, you'll have to make use of the royal coffers to pull in favours from the local adventurers for any of the more challenging tasks, and they don't seem to like taking orders. The main driving force behind *Majesty 2* is those heroes: they'll need a place to call



home, a couple of stores to keep them well-stocked on potions, masterwork weapons and powerful trinkets, and loads (and loads) of gold if you intend to use them for anything other than keeping their own hides safe. Sadly, the resulting system is nowhere near as complex as it could be: heroes cost money to hire and resurrect, spend money on items, and require payment to perform almost all tasks, but there are few other sim-like elements at work here. If you were expecting something as involved as *The Sims*, or even the excellent *Space Colony*, you'll be sorely disappointed. Instead, you'll place down flags for exploring, attacking, defending, and avoiding, give those flags a value, and watch as any interested heroes flock to the location to



Heroes on tap

Warrior: Tough as a bag of nails, and probably as bright. These guys will be first in line for attack quests, and can be upgraded with a host of suitably powerful attacks. Can be upgraded to either a Paladin of Dauros or a Blademaster of Krolm.

Ranger: The Robin Hood of heroes, this fellow will happily scout out the surrounding lands, and do extra damage to fluffy woodland creatures. Can be upgraded to Beastmaster of Fervus or Archer of Helia.

Cleric: The most important hero you can have, if you like to keep the coffers free from resurrection fees. These lovely ladies will ensure your rag-tag army is kept healthy, and can dish out damage to undead when needed. Can be upgraded to Priestesses of either Krypta or Agrela.

Rogue: Sneaky, weedy, and not terribly good at staying alive, but able to land that killing blow if the opportunity arises, rogues are better suited to keeping themselves out of trouble than causing it. Will chase after quests that involve lots of money.

Wizard: Possibly the most powerful heroes, but definitely the toughest to keep from dying. They love the taste of adventure, but more often see their demise before the task is done. When they've gained sufficient experience, however, these aged gentlemen will turn the tide of battle with ease.

Elf: Poncey and air-headed, but deadly. The Elves of Ardanía require a prosperous marketplace before they're available for hire, but having a couple of these on your side will ensure you have the ranged advantage in any battle. Elves do not like Dwarves.

Dwarf: Rough, gruff, and hairy; pretty good with an axe, too. Dwarves are tougher than your average warrior, cost a pretty penny more, and aren't available until your blacksmith is decent enough, but they'll hold the frontline until there's no-one left standing, if that's what your gold requires of them.



accomplish your given task, if the price is right. That's pretty much it. Heroes don't have moods, urges, demands, or any sort of needs, but certain classes are more, or less, partial to certain quest-types than others (Rangers, for example, love a good scouting quest, and Rogues seldom engage large foes head-on). Additionally, each hero has their own XP, inventory, and set of statistics that separate them from all the others of their class.

Starting from a humble palace with a couple of nearby peasant shacks, you'll build up your army one guild hall at a time. The classes on tap are vast, if anything, and you'll soon find a balance that suits your playing style. In addition to producing and housing just three heroes, each guild can be used to research skills for those heroes, and some also offer services that any willing customer can use – such as the rogues guild's poisoned blades, or the wizards' enchanting. Each guild also offers the player a single spell, which (of course) costs money to cast; these vary from healing, to raiding the taxes, to arming the local militia. Your heroes will also need a place to spend their supposedly hard-earned dosh, such as a marketplace, blacksmith, or magic bazaar.

During the campaign, which is comprised of 17 maps, you'll be tasked by your advisor to perform a number of services. The quests vary greatly, and

include vanquishing the local vampire count, earning X amount of gold before the timer runs out, and defending yourself from two opposing factions. While it's certainly a step up from the first *Majesty*, the story that holds these various quests together is as shallow as a paddling pool, and seems more like a token gesture than anything else. On the positive side, the story and its delivery are pretty humorous, and once you've given up on finding any real depth, you'll soon discover that *Majesty 2* has its own kind of goofy charm that will appeal to those looking for a strategy game that doesn't demand too much from the ol' grey matter. **NAG**
Geoff Burrows



The Score

12

1

1-4

None

www.pegi.info

Plus

- + Humorous
- + Interesting control system

Minus

- Lacks depth
- Little replay value
- Weak story

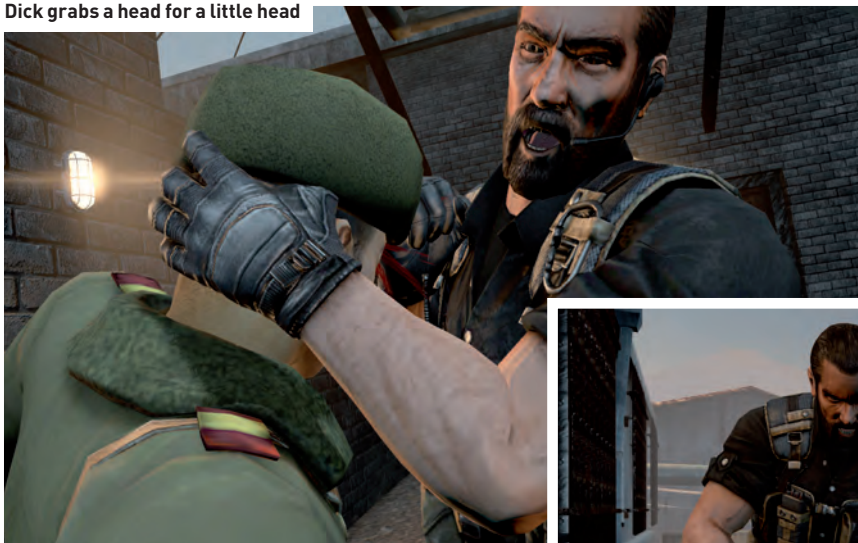
Bottom Line

Should be sufficient for those looking for a light-hearted fantasy romp, but won't be enough to satisfy the serious management/simulation fans.

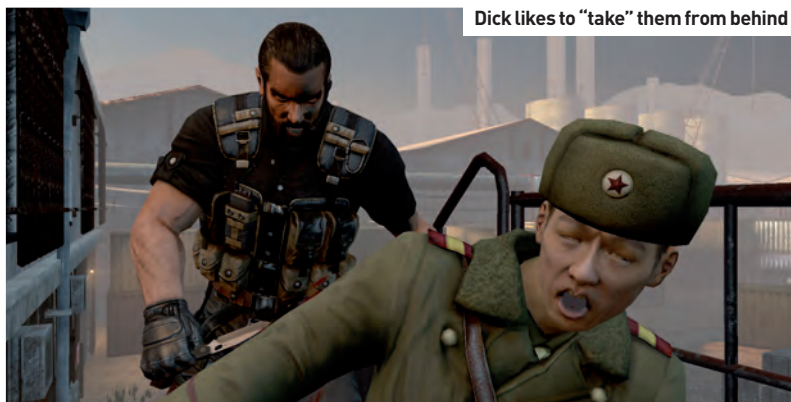
AVAILABLE AT
Look & Listen
FOR THE FANS

72

Dick grabs a head for a little head



Dick likes to "take" them from behind



Rogue Warrior

Some games should just stay on consoles

Genre→ First-Person Shooter

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

IN THIS TITLE, THE player assumes the role of Dick Marcinko, a supposedly super-tough special ops sort – the name belongs to the real-life founder of the SEAL Team Six. [Minor spoilers ahead] Marcinko and his team are heli-dropped behind enemy lines in North Korea to investigate, and deal with, a potential nuclear threat. Something goes wrong (surprise, surprise), and Marcinko is left alone, the rest of his team dead. From this point on, it is up to the player to penetrate the enemy forces, striking with both stealth and force to get past KPA forces, contact a mole, discover a nuclear munitions factory, and pursue a deadly package across the border into Soviet territory. Considering that the Nazis are still used as bad guys in games, it is hardly surprising that, decades after the end of the Cold War, so are the "Commies".

THE GOOD

To be perfectly blunt, there isn't much that is particularly good about this game. It could be argued that the relative shortness of its single-player campaign is actually a blessing, else the torture would be further prolonged. But it's hardly a good thing if a player thinks "thank god that's over" upon finishing a game. Sadly, however, that is exactly the case here.

Although this is a Steam-supported game, when you install it you are offered the option of installing an offline, non-Steam version. This is a good option for us bandwidth-starved South Africans to have, if we don't intend to play this game online [and, for reasons you will see soon enough, you are unlikely to want to.]



There is one (much hyped) element to this game that proves quite entertaining: the stealth kill moves. There is no finesse required to pull these off – you need merely get close to an enemy and press a key to kill an enemy without using a gun. Marcinko will use his knife or a bare-handed attack to dispose of the target. These moves include various knife kills, strangulation, and throwing enemies off elevated places (which is, needless to say, grimly hilarious.) However, the kill moves are all scripted, so their repertoire is limited, and soon enough you've seen them all and they start becoming old hat. Also, they become quite predictable – in fact, if you replay any part of the game, it is very likely that the sequence of your kill moves will be repeated.

THE BAD

Sadly, this game is yet another lacklustre first-person shooter. It seems that beyond getting a real-life



SEAL operative's name under licence, the developers didn't really have any sort of real direction with this title. The progression is strictly linear, which in and of itself is not necessarily a bad thing, but it gets very monotonous rather quickly, and the story is dull and clichéd. Essentially, in each new area you sneak in and get a few stealthy kills, until you are spotted and the enemies are alerted, and thereafter you simply shoot whatever gets in your way, picking up weapons as your clips are depleted. You can carry two weapons (your knife doesn't count), with the option of leaving your silenced pistol (which, implausibly, has unlimited ammo, while all other guns are very ammo-limited) in one slot. The selection of guns is quite broad, and consists of the usual assortment of assault rifles, sniper rifles, shotguns, submachine guns, and so forth. Oddly, it appears that the guns have



no recoil. Oh sure, the slide mechanism slides up and down, but your aim will not deteriorate with shots fired – you can keep the trigger down and the crosshair won't budge. I guess Mr Marcinko is just that strong, huh?

In addition to dull game progression, there are notable shortcomings in terms of graphics. Enemy models look very dated, for starters, an impression that is reinforced by their retarded AI. Environments are not downright terrible, but are somewhat drab. Light sourcing is also very primitive. For example, while ascending a stairwell at night, you may notice the moonlight shining in through a window, and creating beams in the suspended dust. This looks quite nice – until you step into the beam and notice that in no way is it affected. In fact, the character doesn't cast a shadow at all! I know that the protagonist is supposed to be a stealthy agent, but this is ridiculous! In fact, the character casts no shadow even with the shadows detail level turned up to maximum. This is quite odd, considering that enemies do cast shadows – in fact, it is often possible to spot an enemy before you see him by a shadow that he casts, which admittedly is pretty cool.

There is a major problem with this game, which speaks of poor porting from console, and even worse quality control. Most players on PC will experience an extremely annoying micro-stutter – every two seconds, the game lags for a split-second. This makes aiming in a fire-fight very tricky, and even walking a straight line gets annoying. Can you imagine a multiplayer game in these conditions? I suppose that, in light of this, the lack of recoil on weapons is a blessing. The problem, apparently, is caused by using a USB mouse, which is inexcusable – show me a serious gamer, these days, who uses a PS/2-based mouse. While it is quite possible that by the time you read this there will be a patch to fix this, it is unconscionable that such an issue could have made it through testing – didn't the developers test with gaming-grade hardware?

THE UGLY

It is one thing to include mature content in a game or a movie, but quite another when such content is both gratuitous and excessive. I barely exaggerate



when I say that every second word the protagonist utters is an expletive, and this gets old very quickly. Dick Marcinko's real-life mentor was, apparently, the most profane man he had ever met, and I guess it rubbed off on his protégé, which this game portrays. Nevertheless, it very soon feels unnecessary and excessive. While it is understandable and even logical for the character to swear when taking a bullet, it makes rather less sense for him to be shouting imprecations during stealth kills, especially with another enemy standing a couple of metres away – surely silence is a rather important element of stealth? **NAG**

Alex Jelagin

The Score

			18
1	24	4	www.pegi.info

- | Plus | Minus |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + It eventually ends + Cool kill moves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor porting - Dull gameplay - Dated graphics |

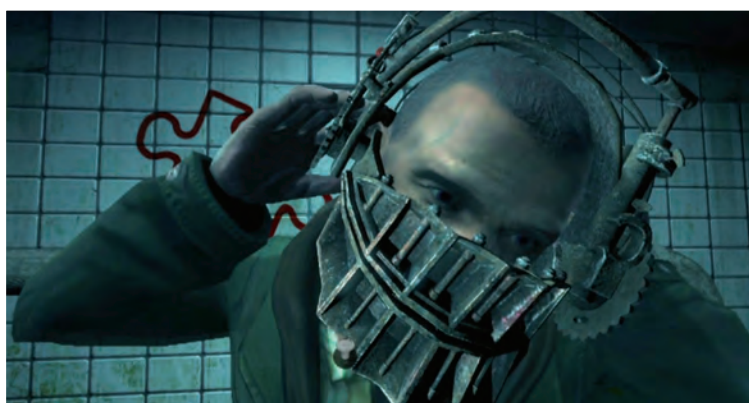
Bottom Line

This game's best feature is the fact that it eventually ends – hardly a ringing endorsement!

AVAILABLE AT
Look & Listen
FOR THE PAGES



The orthodontist I have to wear
thith headgear to fixth my overbite



Saw

A game better left on the cutting room floor

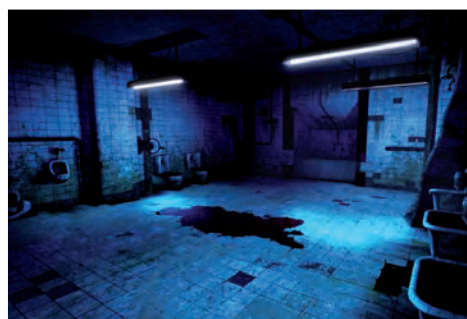
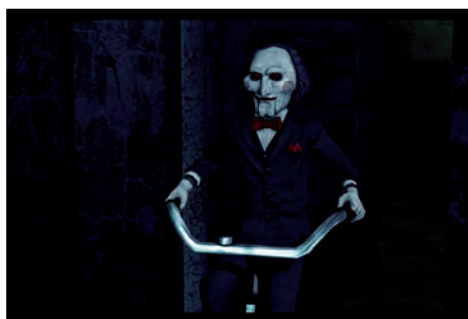
Genre→ First-Person Shooter

PC 360 **PS3** Wii PS2 PSP DS

THE SAW MOVIE FRANCHISE, though arguably of little cinematic merit, already numbers 6 individual films, and shows little sign of slowing down. Its horrifyingly graphic "torture porn" formula has earned the series a cult following, and the Jigsaw Killer's jump to videogames was an inevitable occurrence – perhaps what is most surprising is that it didn't happen sooner. Konami, veterans of the survival horror genre, seem to be hoping that *Saw* will become the renowned *Silent Hill* franchise's spiritual successor. Unfortunately, though, their first attempt just doesn't quite cut it, if you'll forgive the horrendous pun.

The *Saw* game casts players in the role of detective David Tapp, whom fans will no doubt remember from the movie series. David is trapped in Jigsaw's asylum, and must navigate the trap-laden sanatorium and all its perils in order to secure his freedom. To make matters a little more complicated, the asylum is filled with a number of other victims of Jigsaw's cruel games, who've all been told that the key to their freedom has literally been buried inside Tapp's chest.

The six chapters of the game see you traversing the asylum, dodging traps, and fighting off a multitude of foes, whilst at the end of each chapter you're faced with having to rescue one of Tapp's friends or loved ones, from what is usually a particularly large and grisly device. In addition to employing instant kill traps, like shotgun rigged doors, *Saw* also relies heavily on timed puzzles that see you trying to complete circuits or successfully align valves. Of course, it's all presented



in typical *Saw* style – keys required to progress are hidden in macabre carcasses or toilets filled with dirty hypodermic needles.

While this is all perfectly fitting for a title based on the *Saw* films, it seems the developers unfortunately ran out of source material far too early – although the puzzles are suitably creepy the first time round, they soon start repeating themselves, leading to tedium and frustration rather than the intended thrills. The combat system adds to the misery of playing *Saw*, thanks to unwieldy controls that make Tapp slow and cumbersome to move. You have access to a number of weapons, all of which require complicated button presses to fire, and which are absurdly slow and inaccurate. The enemy AI too is lacking, meaning that simple punch combinations are always the most effective attacks, rendering the 18 different available weapons all but useless. You are able to set your own environmental traps for your enemies, which can lead to some satisfying kills, but ultimately it's not a significant enough touch to make up for the game's shortcomings.

Although *Saw* does well initially to recreate the chilling atmosphere of the films, the game itself soon sinks into the depths of tedium and frustration, shamelessly regurgitating its own content at you in an artificial attempt to extend the overall experience. *Saw* never comes close to achieving the heights of the *Silent Hill* series – it's a cheap knock-off at best, and its novelty soon wears off.

NAG
Adam Liebman

The Score

1
None
None
www.pegi.info

Plus
+ True to the film
+ Voice acting

Minus
- Flawed combat
- Repetitive puzzles
- Frustrating to play

Bottom Line

Saw shows great potential in recreating the atmosphere of the films, but the game itself falls terribly short

AVAILABLE AT
Look & Listen
For the Fans



Look & Listen

DVD • CD • GAMES — MP3 • ACCESSORIES

For the Fans

PLAYSTATION 3



PS3 DUALSHOCK®3 Wireless Controller
Feel all of the action onscreen right in your hands. With the DUALSHOCK®3 wireless controller you'll feel every hit, crash or explosion like never before.

R799⁹⁹



PS3 Blu-Ray Remote
Use Bluetooth® wireless communication to operate playback on disc on the PLAYSTATION®3 system.

R399⁹⁹



PS3 Wireless Headset
The Bluetooth® Headset leverages advances in voice technology to bring next generation features to the PLAYSTATION®3 system.

R499⁹⁹



PS3® Wireless Keypad
The Wireless keypad for the PLAYSTATION®3 system provides the freedom of easy to use texting and mouse input capabilities. (Wireless controller not included)

R499⁹⁹



**SAVE
R300**

PS3® DUALSHOCK®3 Wireless Controller & Remote Bundle
Bundle includes: PS3® DUALSHOCK®3 Wireless Controller and Remote.

R899⁹⁹

XBOX 360



xBox360 Wireless Controller
Using optimised technology the black xBox360 wireless controller lets you enjoy a 30 foot range and up to 40 hours of life.

R499⁹⁹

(Also available in white)



xBox360 Universal Media Remote
Engineered to serve as your integrated control centre for the entire xBox360 experience.

R399⁹⁹



xBox360 Play & Charge Kit
Play & Charge Cable enables continuous game play, more than 30 hours of play per charge. Battery fuel gauge through the xBox360 dashboard and includes play & charge cable and nimh rechargeable battery pack.

R299⁹⁹

(Also available in white)



xBox360 HDMI Cable
Experience digital high-definition of your video and audio all in one cable. Enjoy movies and games at up to 1080 pixel resolution and superior audio via the Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound output.

R599⁹⁹



xBox360 Wireless Microphone
Extend your vocal range and brighten any performance with the xBox360 wireless microphone. Your inner rock star will bask in the lights that flash on each handle, plus the mic doubles as an effect studio for your own solo.

R349⁹⁹

Nintendo®



Wii Double Pack
Pack includes: Wii Remote, Motion Plus & Safety Cover.

R849⁹⁹



Wii Motion Plus
The Wii MotionPlus accessory attaches to the end of the Wii Remote and allows for more comprehensive tracking of a player's arm position and orientation, providing an unmatched level of precision and immersion.

R349⁹⁹



Wii Nunchuk
The Nunchuk is a Wii Remote accessory that gives an additional means of control in Nunchuk-compatible games.

R359⁹⁹

(Also available in white)



Wii Play & Remote
Create your own personal Mii character with the Wii console's built-in Mii Channel and then play as yourself in this compilation of nine simple, fun games like target shooting, table tennis and fishing. Wii Play comes bundled with a Wii Remote.

R759⁹⁹

SHOP ONLINE at www.lookandlisten.co.za

Look & Listen
For the Fans

NAG's preferred retailer.

DVD • CD • GAMES • MP3 • ACCESSORIES

25 stores nationwide, for store or product information contact us on: 011 467 3717 or at www.lookandlisten.co.za/storelocator/. While stocks last. E&OE. Prices and availability subject to change at the discretion of the supplier.



These cards accepted in store.

Look & Listen
For the Fans

Developer→ Gearbox Software Publisher→ 2K Games
 Distributor→ www.borderlandsthegame.com | Steam | PSN | XBLA Web→ www.borderlandsthegame.com

Borderlands: The Zombie Island of Dr Ned

Shoot, loot, repeat. Now with 100% more zombies.

Genre→ Action

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

SOMETIMES, AS A CLOTTED sun slides down beyond the rim of the Arid Badlands, and nothing but the crack of sniper fire and the distant yodel of a midget recently divested of a useful limb stirs the drawing night, I wonder to myself, "Am I ever going to get sick of this stupid game?" I mean, there's really not much to it. It's mostly (all) just rushing about and shooting stuff. Something so completely barren of all sophistication, ingenuity, and innovation has no business being so much fun. Reload, zoom, CRACK. Keeeeeelellleeeeeeeee. As Marcus Kincaid might say, "You can never be too rich, too good-looking, or too well-armed. Or pathologically addicted to *Borderlands*. Just look at this nice gun!"

Much like *Borderlands* is the very definition of outrageously dumb fun fun, so *The Zombie Island of Dr Ned* is the very definition of the how developers should do this whole DLC thing properly. This is very obviously something that wasn't yanked out of the original game and repackaged for gullible consumer consumption at a premium rate, but rather something designed entirely as an



optional extra that isn't actually really all that optional in the end because it's totally ****ing awesome.

While the gameplay remains completely unchanged, the titular island itself is very much a distinctly distinct area from the rest of the game, with its own queer twisted storybook presentation and exclusive enemy types. Real trees, Loot Goons, Skelerakk, some guy you thought was dead but isn't, and a thoroughly ludicrous conclusion make this a compulsory download for anybody who already loves (wants, needs, can't stop playing) *Borderlands*. Oh yeah, and zombies. My only gripe is that Gearbox hasn't included any new weapon types, but since I've not yet completed my 17 billion gun collection, I can't really complain much. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl



The Score



Bottom Line

Everything is better with zombies

(85)

Developer→ Gearbox Software Publisher→ 2K Games
 Distributor→ www.borderlandsthegame.com | Steam | PSN | XBLA Web→ www.borderlandsthegame.com

Borderlands: Mad Moxxi's Underdome Riot

Shoot, loot, repeat. Now with 100% more arenas.

Genre→ Action

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

SERIAL WIDOW, MAD MOXXI'S chucked that happily ever after business and got herself her very own hillbilly three-ring circus arena instead, decked out in Mardi Gras lights and the shabby detritus of somebody's cabaret theatre. Hey, when your nickname's "Mad," you might as well be unpredictable. Roll out the goons!

"It's not Horde, and it's not Firefight," says Gearbox. But it actually sort of is. There's also nothing more to this DLC than the Underdome arena and a new item storage facility, so anyone looking for a story should look somewhere else. So here's how it goes: there are three arenas and two tournament tiers. First time around, you have to grind 25 waves (spanning five rounds) of enemies into hotdogs in each arena. Second time over, that's 100 waves (or 20 rounds). As each round starts off, a number of modifier cards are played – these can be anything from additional or reduced damage on certain weapon classes, high speed, low gravity, no crits, or a bunch of other stuff. There's no XP accrued for kills,



and there's a loot drop only at the end of each round. The kicker? Die and get out. In the first-tier tournament, that's game over – thanks for playing, please try again, kiss, kiss. In the second-tier tournament, there's a checkpoint every five rounds, so you'll be starting over at the last one, possibly losing up to four rounds of progress.

Ganging up with comrades is, of course, emphatically recommended, since your entire team will have to be smudged in the dust before it's crying time. Players shot out are teleported to a crow's nest penalty box, and can continue to provide sniper support from up there. Expect a lot of bawling at each other. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl



The Score



Bottom Line

Heaps of the fun stuff, but don't even think about going it solo.

(78)

DANTE'S INFERNO™

GO TO HELL

www.dantesinferno.com

www.visceralgames.com



PS3



PSP
PlayStation Portable

XBOX 360

VISCERAL
GAMES



© 2009 Electronic Arts Inc. EA, the EA logo, and Dante's Inferno are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All Rights Reserved. "PSP", "PS3" and "XBOX 360" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies and are used under license from Microsoft. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Supercar Challenge

Gentlemen, start your engines (and stick to the racing line!)

Genre→ First-Person Shooter

PC 360 **PS3** Wii PS2 PSP DS

SUPERCAR CHALLENGE IS THE latest release from System 3, the studio behind last year's fiendishly difficult *Trofeo Pirelli*. Once again aimed more at the simulation than the arcade end of the market, *Supercar Challenge* offers players a choice of 44 different tarmac-eating monsters, including the likes of the Bugatti Veyron, Aston Martin DBR9, Mercedes McLaren SLR, and Pagani Zonda, to name but a few. The line-up is somewhat deceptive, however, as 35 of the available cars are Ferraris, leaving most of the other manufacturers with only one vehicle each. Although the selection is quite diverse, especially compared to last year's offering, it's still a far cry from the sort of depth that racing fans can expect from *Gran Turismo 5*'s impending release. Nonetheless, the variety is appreciated, particularly compared with the career mode from last year's game, which tied players down to the Ferrari F430. In terms of attention to detail, it's difficult to fault *Supercar Challenge*. System 3 have again done a

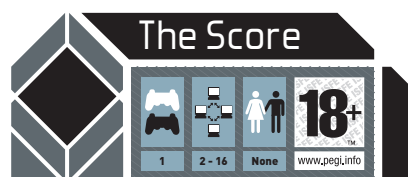


fantastic job of replicating real-world physics for all the different vehicles, each of which has its own distinctive feel out on the track. Of course, this is a title very much aimed at the purists – in spite of an abundance of driving aids, as well as adjustable difficulty levels, the game remains an incredibly difficult one which, thanks to its realism, requires great patience and dedication to master. A paucity of customisation options for vehicles, and dreadfully slow progression in the Challenge mode, further detract from the experience. Realistic car models and authentic, convincing engine sounds are let down by the game's otherwise drab presentation, lacklustre AI, and ultimate lack of innovation as compared to last year's title. *Supercar Challenge*



might satisfy purists obsessed with perfecting lap times and racing lines, but is somewhat too specialised to have much mainstream appeal. **NAG**

Adam Liebman



AVAILABLE AT
Look & Listen
For the Fans

Bottom Line

System 3 have once again released a simulator with enough realism to satisfy even the most ardent of sticklers



Developer→ Loose Cannon Studios Publisher→ Konami Distributor→ Ster Kinekor Entertainment Web→ www.konami.com

Tornado Outbreak

Not just the weather report anymore

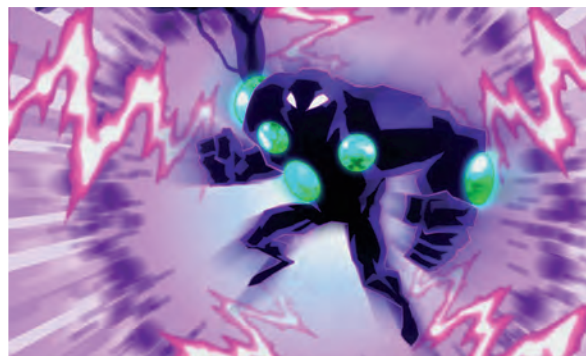
Genre→ First-Person Shooter

PC 360 **PS3** Wii PS2 PSP DS

TORNADO OUTBREAK CERTAINLY DOESN'T look like much at first glance, but beneath the box-art that's too cheery to be taken seriously lies a surprisingly enjoyable experience, made all the more addictive by its simplicity. The game casts you in the role of Zephyr, a wind elemental tasked with retrieving a missing set of "power orbs" from a group of nefarious creatures known as Fire Fliers. You set about this task by steering a tornado around a number of levels, each split into various zones. As you progress through the levels and destroy an assortment of structures, your tornado gradually grows in size, becoming increasingly powerful and gathering new abilities, which serve to further increase your destructive powers. Adding some depth to the simple play dynamic is a time limit imposed on each level, which can be partially replenished by defeating the aforementioned Fire Fliers. Players are also given the opportunity to revisit earlier levels once they've gained new abilities, in order to unlock previously unattainable bonuses.

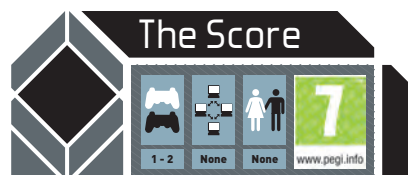


Also thrown in for good measure are a fair number of interesting boss encounters that do well to keep the *Tornado Outbreak* experience fresh throughout its relatively short campaign. Simple and intuitive controls, and colourful visuals complete with some cartoon-quality cut-scenes to tell the game's predictable but workable story, round out the package. Despite its underwhelming presentation, *Tornado Outbreak* is a thoroughly polished and surprisingly addictive romp, which is fitting given that Loose Cannon Studios was founded by former employees of Sucker Punch, renowned for such titles as *Sly Cooper* and *inFamous*. *Tornado Outbreak* proves that a simplistic and family friendly title can still be entertaining – it's a short-lived experience that never



quite reaches the heights of the *Katamari* series, from which it drew its inspiration, but it's nonetheless an enjoyable way to spend a couple of hours. **NAG**

Adam Liebman



AVAILABLE AT
Look & Listen
For the Fans

Bottom Line

Tornado Outbreak is a short-lived but unique and engaging experience that never takes itself too seriously.



Zombie Driver

On the highway to hell

Genre→ Driving/shooter

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

ZOMBIES GAMES ARE A dime a dozen these days. Now, joining the masses is little-known independent Polish development team EXOR Studios [creators of the multiplayer-focused shoot-'em-up/racer *D.I.P.R.I.P.*] with *Zombie Driver*, a game in which you kill lots of zombies without ever setting foot out of your vehicle.

If it sounds like a silly idea, that's because it is, but this is a game that's best taken with a pinch of salt. The premise is simple: you're stuck in a city that's suffered a zombie outbreak; the military has closed off the roads, and you feel that you'd be safer behind the wheel of a taxi [and later, other vehicles including an ambulance, sports car and police car]. The military thinks that you're a pretty smart guy for making this decision, and realises that your non-official status puts you in prime position to take care of a few tasks that they wouldn't dare soil their hands with. And, no: you can't have a tank; don't ask why. What follows is a series of repetitive but satisfyingly violent missions that require you to drive to a location, clear out the



loitering undead, rescue some people and head back to base. Your choice of vehicle is important: each can only carry a certain number of passengers, and the balance between speed, armour and ramming ability [vital when trying to tear through a horde of zombies without slowing down too much] will determine how specialised or generally-suited that vehicle is. Additionally, different zombie types require different driving strategies.

When you're not hurtling into zombies with a perfectly-executed power slide, you can also unleash a barrage of weaponry at them from a safe distance. Unfortunately, you can only have one weapon at a time: you want more, go find a pickup somewhere; usually somewhere infested with more zombies. There are a couple of other niggles that keep *Zombie Driver* from being anything more than light entertainment for a few hours, such as the

lack of mini-map, jarring camera motions (which have been more-or-less fixed with a recent patch), and pretty pointless storyline, but these factors are balanced out by the excellent visuals and impressive responsiveness that the developers have when it comes to feedback. DLC will go a long way here. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

The Score



Bottom Line

Fun and silly while it lasts, but ultimately lacking in anything that will keep you coming back for more.

(71)

PIRATING OF GAMES IS A CRIME!

Don't Support Criminals!

Report them!



Thank you for Supporting Original Product!



AGAINST COPYRIGHT THEFT
crimeline SMS: 32211



YOUR ANONYMOUS CRIME TIP-OFF LINE



Chimichanga #1

Format: Comic Miniseries | **Publisher:** Albatross Exploding Funnybooks
Writer: Eric Powell | **Artist:** Eric Powell | **Price:** R32.50

ERIC POWELL HAS WON numerous Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards for his well-liked series, *The Goon*, which is also written and illustrated by Powell himself. His latest comic, *Chimichanga*, tells the bizarre tale of a rather unsuccessful travelling circus, and the young bearded girl who is a part of it. When she stumbles across a strange creature, which she befriends, the lives of the girl and her circus friends are changed forever. The dark and twisted corners of Powell's mind are brought out into the day in this light-hearted tale, which "runs" almost like a children's book. With artwork that is rigorous in its attention to detail, while remaining funny and quirky, and humorous characters and comical scripts, *Chimichanga* is bound to build a bit of a cult following of its own; much like Powell's *The Goon* series has.



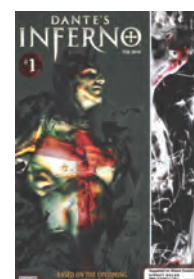
Clive Burmeister



Dante's Inferno #1

Format: Comic Miniseries | **Publisher:** Wildstorm
Writer: Christos Gage | **Artist:** Diego Latorre | **Price:** R34.50

ONE OF THE MOST epic and well-known poems of all time, *Dante's Inferno* is currently being turned into a videogame by EA; and in following the trend of basing a comic series on a new videogame release, Wildstorm is bringing *Dante's Inferno* to the comic format. Even for those without the classic education to have encountered the original story, as well as those without any interest in the game it is based on, Christos Gage's telling of *Dante's Inferno* is both compelling and intricate, and the stunning detail and emotional stroke work of Diego Latorre's artistic style only serve to exaggerate and enhance the qualities that have maintained such a level of fame for this tale throughout time. Set in the Middle Ages, a crusader named Dante, and his devoted lover Beatrice, are tricked by dark forces, leaving Dante on a journey into Hell itself as he tries to rescue his lady.



Clive Burmeister



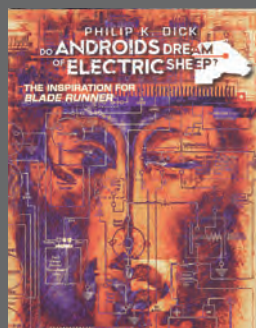
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

Format: Hardcover Graphic Novel | **Publisher:** BOOM! Studios
Artist: Tony Parker | **Writer:** Philip K. Dick | **Price:** R260

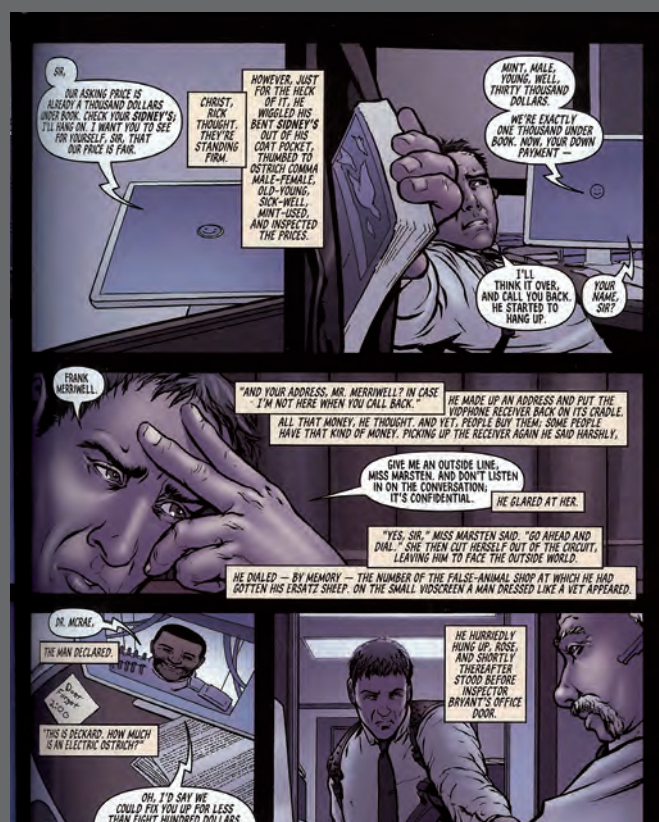
DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF *Electric Sheep?* was originally written by the esteemed author Philip K. Dick in 1968. Since then, it's gone on to enjoy a cult following that eventually culminated in the film *Blade Runner*. While *Blade Runner* only took ideas from the book, this comic version is pretty much - word for word - the same.

The majority of the story follows the life of Rick Deckard, detective and android hunter, in a post-apocalyptic future Earth. After World War Terminus, those who survived fled to the Mars colony. The unlucky, or unwilling, stayed behind to live out their days in the ruined cities of Earth. As a part of the UN's plans to attract people to Mars, battle-designed androids were re-engineered to cope with the stresses of domestic life, and were given to colonists as personal assistants. A few, however, broke free from their lives as artificial slaves, and returned to Earth, disguised as humans.

There's a lot more depth to the story than just the hunting and killing of androids, and the comic manages to maintain the same sombre, depressing feel that the book accomplished so well. It only covers the first third or so of the book, however, but future issues will no doubt make an appearance. Since it makes no attempt to adapt the book to this comic format, you might find it's actually easier to just read the original book, but the artwork at least goes a long way to counteract this, as Tony Parker's work is quite good.



Geoff Burrows



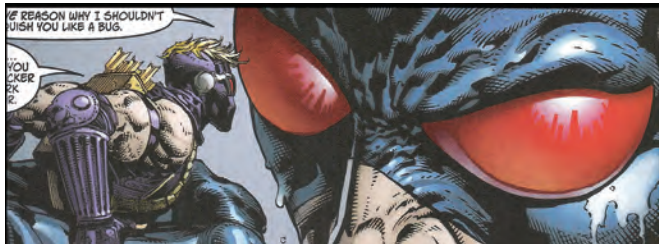
Ultimatum (HC)

Format: Graphic Novel | **Publisher:** Marvel | **Writer:** Jeph Loeb
Artist: David Finch | **Price:** R224.95

MARVEL'S ULTIMATE UNIVERSE HAS gone from strides forwards to leaps and bounds in its ten-year growth of readership and popularity. Combining a unique mix of fantastic artwork and gripping storylines, it is of small wonder that the comics are so enjoyed. Recently, the atmosphere within the ultimate universe had reached boiling point, and something had to give soon. Then Magnito, driven mad with rage over recent events (see *Ultimates 3*) issues his ultimatum to the world: "When God didn't like what He'd created, He washed it all away in forty days and forty nights. I will do it in three..." Now, all of the Earth's greatest heroes must band together to stop the destruction of the world, and even the mightiest among them may be lost in this epic battle. I have always had great expectations of an *Ultimate* title, ever since reading the very first *Ultimate Spider-Man*, and right up until the conclusion of *Ultimates* volume 3, so it was with some apprehension that I sat down to read *Ultimatum*, which was to be a sort of climax to the line. I was not disappointed; this was definitely one of the best books of 2009!



Clive Burmeister



X-Factor #200

Format: Comic Series | **Publisher:** Marvel | **Writer:** Peter David
Artist: Cansino / Santucci | **Price:** R44.95

X-FACTOR, A TEAM OF super-powered mutants, are working as a detective agency, and have only recently relocated to New York City, in hopes that being super-powered beings themselves, they might attract more business from the large hero community in New York. But business has been slow, so when an unlikely case is brought to them by Valeria and Franklin Richards, the children of Reed Richards of The Fantastic Four, they jump into it head first. As they begin to investigate, they find there may be more to the case than they had originally thought, and things become even trickier as problems outside the mission start to arise as well. Peter David, one of the writers who brought Madrox and the rest of the X-Factor characters to the level of success they experience these days, writes a complex story of tangled plots and suspenseful possibilities, making *X-Factor #200* not only a landmark edition, but a good starting point for new readers as well.



Clive Burmeister



The Unwritten Vol. 01

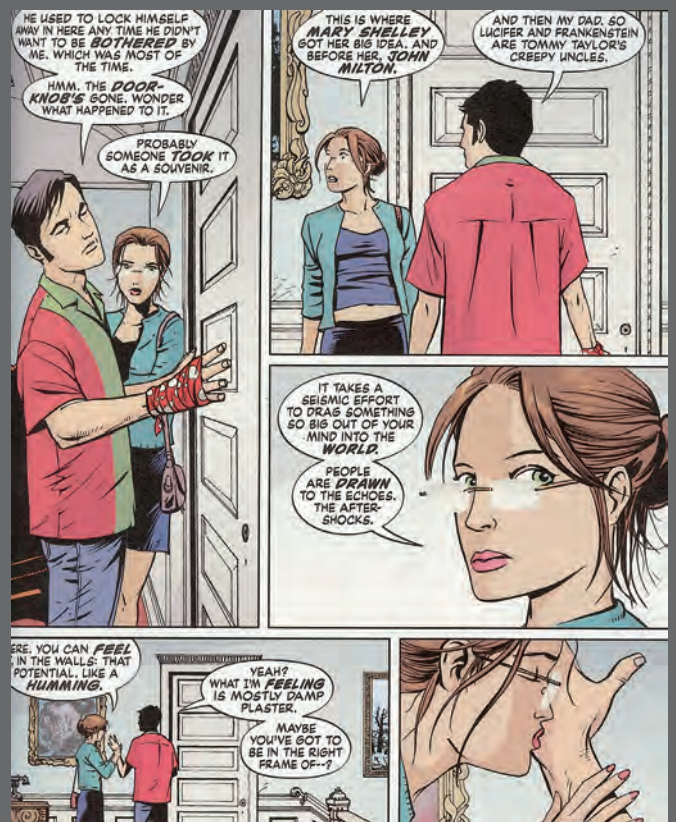
Format: Graphic Novel | **Publisher:** Vertigo | **Writer:** Mike Carey
Artist: Peter Gross | **Price:** R125

THE UNWRITTEN IS A bit of a strange comic. The story revolves around Tom Taylor, son of world famous writer Wilson Taylor – the creator of the *Tommy Taylor* series of fantasy novels. Tommy Taylor is basically Harry Potter, but a bit less of a wimp. His adventures also seem to involve approximately 23% more unicorns. Anyway, things start to go wrong, as they inevitably do in comics, and Tom (the person) soon finds out that the character that his father created (Tommy) has a lot more in common with him than a surname. What ensues is an exciting fantasy romp that's packed with literary references both classic and modern. It's like a comic book for people who read "real books."



Throughout the pages of this graphic novel, which collects issues #1-5, you'll be presented with a number of sub-comics and interesting panel usage, not unlike the elements used in *The Watchmen*. What this amounts to is a world that is incredibly rich and believable, and makes the already well-constructed story all the more intriguing. Peter Gross's art style might come across as simplistic to some, but it's interspersed with high-detail panels that break up any chance of monotony. My only real complaint about the artwork is the washed-out colours. While it's no doubt purposeful, this comic could have benefited from a more vibrant palette to add punch to the sub-comics.

Geoff Burrows



Kanu Unchou: "Three Kingdoms" Version

RRP: R865

Supplier: www.awx.co.za

Series: Ikki Tousen

Scale: 1/8

More Japanese writing on the box means less understanding of this figurine on our end. She's clearly very supple and likes to wear as little armour as possible, probably to keep her liteness intact. She also comes

with a giant spear, so we'd advise that you don't bring into question her choice to wear minimal armour into battle. Also, blue hair! This amazingly detailed figurine comes with a display stand and, obviously, her large spear. Just by the way: her breast armour is removable, just in case you thought she's not already wearing far too little armour...

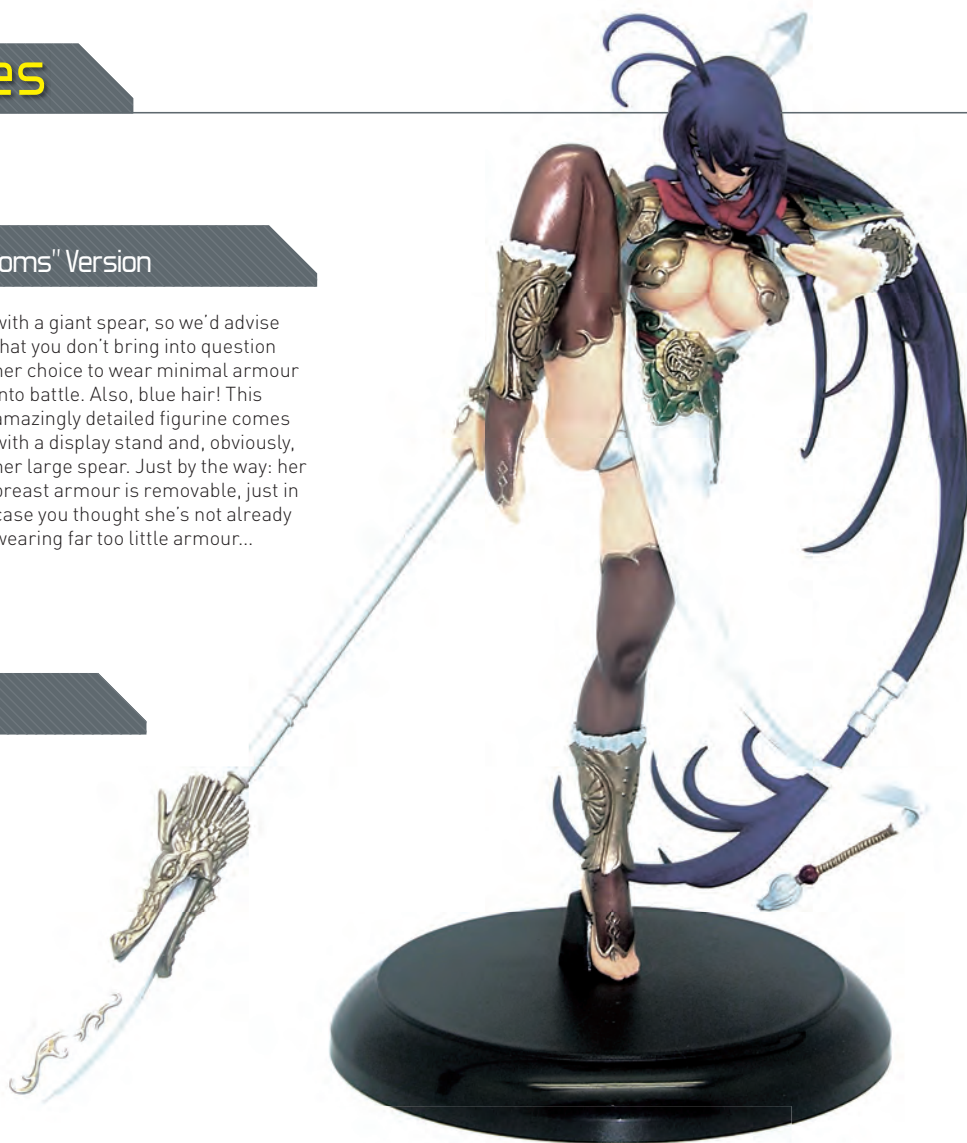
Red-Haired Shanks

RRP: R655

Supplier: www.awx.co.za

Series: Portraits Of Pirates: Series 4

This guy is probably a pirate. A really laid-back pirate, who apparently likes to wear board shorts and sandals when he's looting, pillaging, boarding and doing other pirate-y stuff. This intricately detailed figurine comes with a display stand and removable cloak. It also comes with red hair and a goatee. The poor guy obviously lost his arm at some point, because removing his cloak reveals as much. Thankfully, he only needs one arm to wield the sword by his side – hooray!



Lily Salvatana

RRP: R875

Supplier: www.awx.co.za

Series: Satsuriku no Jango

Scale: 1/8

The second female figurine on this page is a purple-haired cowgirl – or something. We're not quite sure, because all the writing on the box is in Japanese. She sports the most impractical (and therefore, awesome) cowgirl outfit ever to grace the world, and she even comes with a pistol and a display stand. It must also be said that, like the other figurines here, this is an impeccably detailed figurine.

© SEGA, The Creative Assembly, Total War, Napoleon: Total War and the Total War logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of the Creative Assembly Limited. SEGA and the SEGA logo are registered trademarks or trade marks of SEGA Corporation. Windows and the Windows Vista Start button are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies, and 'Games for Windows' and the Windows Vista Start button logo are used under license from Microsoft. All rights reserved. Intel, the Intel logo, Intel Core, and Core Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and other countries.

NAPOLEON

TOTAL WAR™

AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 2010

16

www.pegi.info



Games for Windows

NuMetro
interactive

SEGA®



RealView V-Screen

A Fresnel lens is a lens that makes use of concentric "wedges" that concentrate light in a similar way to how traditional lenses do. Their advantage lies in the fact that, because the refracting angle is repeated instead of being maintained, the thickness can be kept constant (as opposed to increasing toward the middle), meaning that the lens is more compact and much lighter. The design was originally developed

for lighthouses, but much more recently has been used for smaller-scale uses such as magnifying TV screens. This is exactly how the V-Screen for the PSP works. The whole package consists of a hard carry case containing a Fresnel lens, a silicone cushion insert, and a microfiber cleaning cloth. It is compatible with the PSP-1000, PSP-2000, PSP-3000 and PSP Slim. **RRP: R499**

FRAGnStein controller

FRAGnStein is a PC/PS3 controller that is compatible with all PC and PS3 games. A full six-axis motion control allows you to use the mouse to aim and the left hand grip to move. The FRAGnStein has all the normal PS3 controller buttons, programmable, digital sniper buttons, and upgradeable firmware.

R899 | www.fragenstein.co.za



Snippets

Sony and Panasonic have been working on increasing the maximum capacity per-layer on a **Blu-ray Disc from 25 to 33.4GB**.

AMD has announced new DirectX 11 mobile graphics processors. The graphics chips offer bandwidth for **laptops to run two Blu-ray streams at once**, and will support Eyefinity technology, said Asif Rehman, product manager for AMD's mobile graphics business.

NVIDIA President, CEO, and co-founder Jen-Hsun Huang has confirmed that the next-generation **GeForce GPU, the GF100**, is in volume production.

MSI's **Big Bang Fusion motherboard will use Hydra Technology** to allow you to use any combination of ATI and/or NVIDIA graphics cards to power your gaming rig.

Between Christmas and New Year's Day, Xbox LIVE experienced its busiest week ever, adding a new member every second and a record of **more than 2.2 million concurrent members online**.

NAG Awards

DREAM MACHINE: We have a dream. That only the best hardware gets this hot chick, waving her derriere in the air like she just don't care.

HARDWARE: Ever wonder why it's called hardware? If something has this award, then someone got hard for the ware.



Hardware Scoring System

Our hardware scoring system is based on the reviewer's expert opinion. The scale is from 1 to 5 with no fractional values. Each number has a specific meaning, described below. Most products will score 3 or 4, with the occasional 5 or 2, and almost never 1. Note that a high price alone can never lower a score below 3.

- 5 The stuff of Legends.** Buy it while you can, we already have.
- 4 A good deal;** worth it if you're shopping for one.
- 3 What you'd expect,** no problems. You might want to wait for a sale.
- 2 This has some issues.** You should shop around for something else.
- 1 The stuff of Nightmares.** You'll be sorry you got one, even for free.



ASUS ROG G73Jh: The Gamer's Notebook

ASUS unveiled their new G73 notebook at CES in Las Vegas in January. Gaming needs will be taken care of via a Core i7 CPU, ATI Radeon HD5870, 8GB of DDR3, and 1TB of storage space. The matte black design is inspired by the Lockheed F117A Nighthawk Stealth Fighter, and the keyboard has been raised at a natural five-degree angle for better comfort.

Know Your Technology

CUDA: "Compute Unified Device Architecture"; this is the name that NVIDIA has given to its general-purpose computing platform. Much like OpenCL and Direct Compute, it allows general-purpose programming on the GPU. The general-purpose programming takes advantage of the massive number of highly programmable nature processors that exist in today's GPUs. This programming varies from allowing physics calculations to video encoding.

PWM Area: This refers to the power regulation area of the motherboard, usually around the CPU socket. On most modern motherboards, this varies from four to 24 phases. In general, the more power phases there are on a motherboard, the smoother the power delivery, as load is decreased on each individual component, so it stays within optimal operating range, allowing for better switching between the on and off states.

BCLK: This is the base clock for all Intel Core i3/i5/i7 processors. Similar to FSB in some ways, it is the clock from which all other clock speeds on the system are derived from, be it through multiplication or division of this clock. Reference speed for BCLK is 133MHz and this clock is multiplied an X number of times to determine the UNCORE speed, RAM speed and QPI/DMI Link speed.

IMC: "Integrated Memory Controller": An integrated memory controller in modern CPUs refers to a memory controller that is at least in the same package as the CPU, but for the most part it is actually on the same CPU die as the cores. The IMC greatly improves memory efficiency and reduces cache miss performance penalties when compared to an off-die or off-package memory controller as found in older CPUs.

#1,000,000,000

"I think conservatively, if I add up mobile users, social network people that play games, people that play PC games online in Asia, all this stuff, this new audience – there's at least a billion people gaming today, compared to a couple of hundred million just five years ago."

John Riccitiello, Electronic Arts CEO

LEXMA

www.lexmausa.com

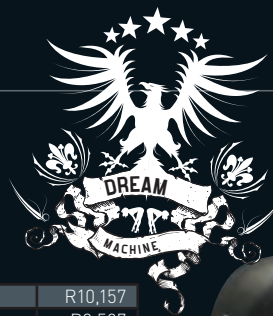
YoYo Mouse
Wire ?!
But Wireless !



Sonic Informed
COMPONENT IMPORTER & DISTRIBUTOR
WWW.SONICINFORMED.COM

Johannesburg
Tel: 011 314 5800
Fax: 011 252 5974
Cape Town
Tel: 021 551 8218
Fax: 021 551 8244





Dream Machine

NEW IN THE DREAM MACHINE
THIS MONTH

GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD7

"We can't really fault this motherboard, and it easily takes the place of the EX58-EXTREME as the Dream Machine motherboard of choice."

Neo Sibeko – page 88

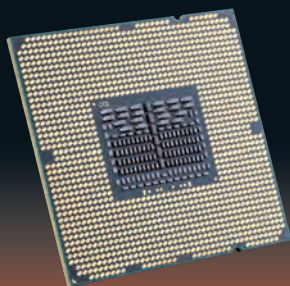
CPU	Intel i7-975 XE	R10,157
Cooling	Thermaltake BigWater 780	R2,507
Motherboard	GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD7	R5,000
RAM	OCZ Triple Channel PC12800 DDR3	R1,399
GPU	ASUS EAH5870	R4,581
Storage	Patriot Torqx 128GB SSD	R5,499
Sound Card	ASUS Xonar Essence ST	R1,799
Headset	Logitech G35	R1,316
Keyboard	Logitech G19	R2,001
Mouse	Logitech G9x Laser	R1,076
PSU	IKONIK Vulcan 1,200W	R4,200
Chassis	Cooler Master Cosmos S	R2,699
Monitor	Samsung SyncMaster T260 LCD	R3,577
Total		R45,811

These prices should only be used as guidelines as pricing may change at any time. The same computer can be built for a little less if one shops around, but R50,000 should be the budget. We will continue to update prices as components change in the machine.
(Source: shopmania.co.za)



Headphones

Logitech G35 Surround Sound
www.logitech.com



Processor

Intel Core i7 Extreme 975
www.intel.com



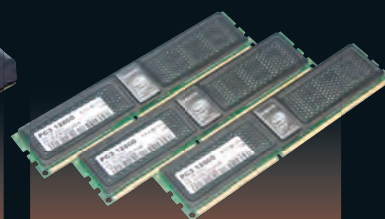
Motherboard

GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD7
www.gigabyte.co.za



Graphics Card

ASUS EAH5870
<http://za.asus.com>



Memory

OCZ Triple Channel PC12800 DDR3
www.ocztechnology.com



Case

Cooler Master Cosmos S
www.coolermaster.com



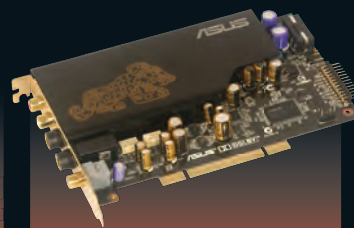
Storage

Patriot Torqx 128GB SSD
www.patriotmemory.com



Power Supply

IKONIK Vulcan 1,200W PSU
www.ikonik.com



Sound

ASUS Xonar Essence ST
<http://za.asus.com>



Monitor

Samsung SyncMaster T260 LCD
www.samsung.co.za



Keyboard

Logitech G19
www.logitech.com



Mouse

Logitech G9x Laser
www.logitech.com



Cooling

Thermaltake BigWater 780
www.thermaltake.com

Hardware Q&A

BONE TO PICK WITH NEO

From: Felix Norton

"HI NEO, I'VE JUST finished reading your 'Price vs. Performance' article and I'm a little confused. How can you justify the comparison of pvp where the Intel build is vastly more expensive. Would it not have been a 'fairer' test to obtain components of similar value and then make a comparison for pvp?

The reason I ask is because I myself have just upgraded. At first I was going straight for the Phenom 965 - I have always been an AMD fan and the CPU looked fantastic. But after more research and comparing pvp with some other CPUs, I discovered another little gem. The Intel i5-750. The CPU is extremely well priced and the performance is mind blowing. In games, this CPU beats the Phenom 965 and matches the i7-920. Coupled with a superb motherboard, the Asus P7P55D, you can lower the price even more. Why not use a similar configuration, which would have made more sense? I think you might have wanted to bring this up for the Jan issue (looking through the article again, I see what is probably a typo: i7-750?), but I still think it was unfair to make such a comparison.

But anyway /rant. Hope you guys have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, keep up the good work!"

Neo: The LGA1156 platform, like the article says, is a more appropriate competitor to the AMD AM3 platform in both price and performance. Therefore, I gathered the best of each platform and put them up against each other, and presented the results of those two configurations. The AMD system won, because it offered great performance at a much better price, even though it was almost always slower than the i7-870.

GIGABYTE MOTHERBOARD EASY BOOST OVERCLOCKING

From: Pieter Ross

"I WOULD LIKE TO ASK you guys a question with regards to overclocking my CPU by using the Easy Boost Utility that came with my Gigabyte Motherboard. Would it be wise to overclock it? It is an Intel Core 2 Quad 2.66GHz CPU and the Quick Boost feature allows 3 stages of overclocking for my CPU.

Level 1: 3.12GHz
Level 2: 3.2GHz
Level 3: 3.28GHz

My motherboard is a Gigabyte EP43-UD3L and I am using an aftermarket CPU cooler, which keeps the CPU at about 30°C when under load. I also have 8GB of DDR2 800 RAM and a 720W PSU and an ASUS Nvidia GeForce GTX285 Matrix GPU.

Please tell me to which level I should overclock the CPU, if at all.

Also, in the December NAG Magazine (2009), I saw when you guys were comparing the Intel and AMD systems, I saw that it said there that the Intel CPU had turbo enabled. Yet, I tried this



in Windows again using the Gigabyte control panel and instead of saying turbo, I decided to go for full thrust, as I figured it would be better. As soon as I applied the setting, the system gave me a blue screen where it said something about physical system memory dump or something like that, after which the system shut down. I tried to put it back on again. It was fine in the motherboard BIOS screen, but as soon as it came to the part where it is supposed to load Windows, it just didn't respond at all. The screen just went black and refused to load Windows. It did this until I went into the motherboard BIOS again to disable the full thrust setting, after which the system was fine again.

Any help in this regard will be very much appreciated."

Neo: Overclocking has never been and will never be about necessity, so asking if it's wise to overclock or not depends entirely on you and what you want to do with your computer. Using software utilities like that is only for those looking to tweak the last few megahertz from their systems, but have done most of the tweaking in the BIOS already. As for the "Turbo" feature, it is only available on some Core i3/i5/i7 CPUs. Core 2 systems do not have a Turbo feature and the Turbo referred to in the article is not the same as the one you are looking at in the Easy Tune software program.

COOLING

From: Mohamed Vally

"HI NEO, I WOULD appreciate any advice on water-cooling and its advantages. Thanks! Keep up the great work!"

Neo: As for water-cooling: personally having used water-cooling for many years, I eventually stopped using it as its advantages are usually outweighed by the investment required to set up an efficient and quality unit. Unless you plan to run an overclocked system continuously or just want as silent a PC as possible, water-cooling isn't going to be worth the effort.

If you'd like our tech guru, Neo (The One), to answer your hardware questions, send a mail to lauren.dasneves@tidemedia.co.za. There aren't any prizes for the letters we print, just simple and honest advice (that is, if we can even decipher the garbled e-mail we sometimes get). **NAG**

LEXMA

www.lexmausa.com

More than just a YoYo,
It is a YoYo Mouse



LEXMA R306

- Navigate forward & backwards through pages with ease
- Special shape fits comfortably into your hand & reduces fatigue
- Embedded single-pull retractable USB cable avoids desktop clutter
- Soft touch material



Johannesburg
Tel: 011 314 5800
Fax: 011 252 5974
Cape Town
Tel: 021 551 8218
Fax: 021 551 8244

Sonic Informed
COMPONENT IMPORTER & DISTRIBUTOR
WWW.SONICINFORMED.COM



Let's have a myth-free 2010

WE ARE STILL IN the early stages of 2010, and as such, this is a great opportunity to set the record straight on many rumours, assumptions, myths and beliefs - especially the myths. Since we are dealing with technology, we should leave very little room for unfounded beliefs - if any at all. Therefore, I have taken it upon myself to debunk many of these myths that have plagued us and which we would do well to leave behind.

MULTI-GPU UPGRADES

There is no such thing as buying a graphics card today and buying a second one two years from now to run in multi-GPU mode for the sole purpose of improving in-game frame rates. While SLI and CrossFire marketing has somewhat alluded to this, the truth is that most people who buy a graphics card and who do not invest in an SLI or CrossFire solution within, say, six months are unlikely to ever invest in a multi-GPU configuration. So, if you are looking to buy a GPU, do not fool yourself into thinking you will buy one graphics card now and another at a later time when the performance is not up to standard. Two years from now, whatever graphics card you have will likely be out of production and not worth the investment.

UPGRADING TO ANY DDR2 PLATFORM

DDR2 is dead and will forever remain so. There is no reason to invest in an AM2+ or LGA775 platform for any reason other than being on a very tight budget. Even then, DDR3 is the cheapest it's ever been and retailing cheaper than some DDR2 modules of the same density. If an upgrade is in order this year, consider only the AM3, P55 or X58 platforms. Everything else is a waste of money and time.

PHYSX IS HERE TO STAY

PhysX through either middleware, hardware acceleration or both is unlikely to go anywhere. Those who think bullet time and such will revolutionise physics simulations are mistaken. Any API, regardless of how good or poor it is, is squarely dependent on the tools that accompany it. If the tools are lacking or simply not there, the API will fail; and as it stands, the tools that are part of the PhysX framework are second to none (NVIDIA APEX for example). At the time of writing, there are more games (across all platforms) that make use of PhysX than any other physics-simulation engine (not counting in-house engines).

DIRECTX IS NOT A GAME

DirectX is not a game. No person can measure the success of any DirectX version squarely based on the visuals of any chosen game. It is an API; nothing less and nothing more. It does not dictate what a game should look like at all. If the art is poor, it will remain so regardless of which API is used to render it. It could be OpenGL 1.2 or DirectX 11 and it will look terrible. For the same reason, driving a supercar does not make one a better driver. One remains the same tragic driver they were before the supercar. Less than a handful of games have pushed the limits of what DirectX could do since Direct X 8.0.

AMD VS. INTEL

We need to let go of this argument, because there is nothing to argue to begin with. At various points during the lifetimes of these two companies, they have had the edge over one another in performance. For the most part, Intel has had the performance crown, but that does not make AMD processors incapable of being competitive. For instance, during the Athlon 64 days, they were superior in almost every way. The approach to CPU design is different within these two companies for many reasons - limited R&D budgets, timing schedules and many other factors. All that shouldn't concern the end user, because nobody is given a discount for being a loyal fan.

OVERCLOCKING DOES NOT DESTROY HARDWARE

Running a component faster than it is rated for will not in any way destroy the part. However, in an attempt to run any component above spec, one usually needs more voltage, current, excessive cooling, etc. All of these can damage hardware, but all these things would damage components in your TV or freezer as well, and it's rather hard to overclock these appliances. Through the process of overclocking, one can damage hardware, but it is not the overclocking itself that causes the damage. For the record, nothing explodes during the process of overclocking. Liquid nitrogen will not cause anything to explode through an energy-releasing reaction. Liquid nitrogen is also incapable of combusting.

These are but a few of the myths, rumours and suggestions that are best left in the decade gone by. As always, there will be newer ones and they, too, will need to be dealt with. If you are reading this, it's unlikely that you believed any of the above; and if you did, well, now you know better. Until then, keep in mind that The Inquirer isn't the best place to learn about anything technology related. **NAG**

"These are but a few of the myths, rumours and suggestions that are best left in the decade gone by. As always, there will be newer ones and they, too, will need to be dealt with."

GIGABYTE™

THE PARLOTONES M1305



THE PARLOTONES



recommend
GIGABYTE notebooks

GIGABYTE 13.3" Ultra-Thin Notebook Booktop M1305



LIMITED EDITION

The ultra thin and light M1305, featuring a flexible bay that can be used for an ODD or a 2nd battery, is best used with the innovative docking station featuring **NVIDIA® GeForce® GT 220** desktop graphics processor and HDMI embedded for the most complete user experience.



For more information please visit www.rectron.co.za or call 0860 582 835 / For Support call our National Technical Support Line: 0861 788 789

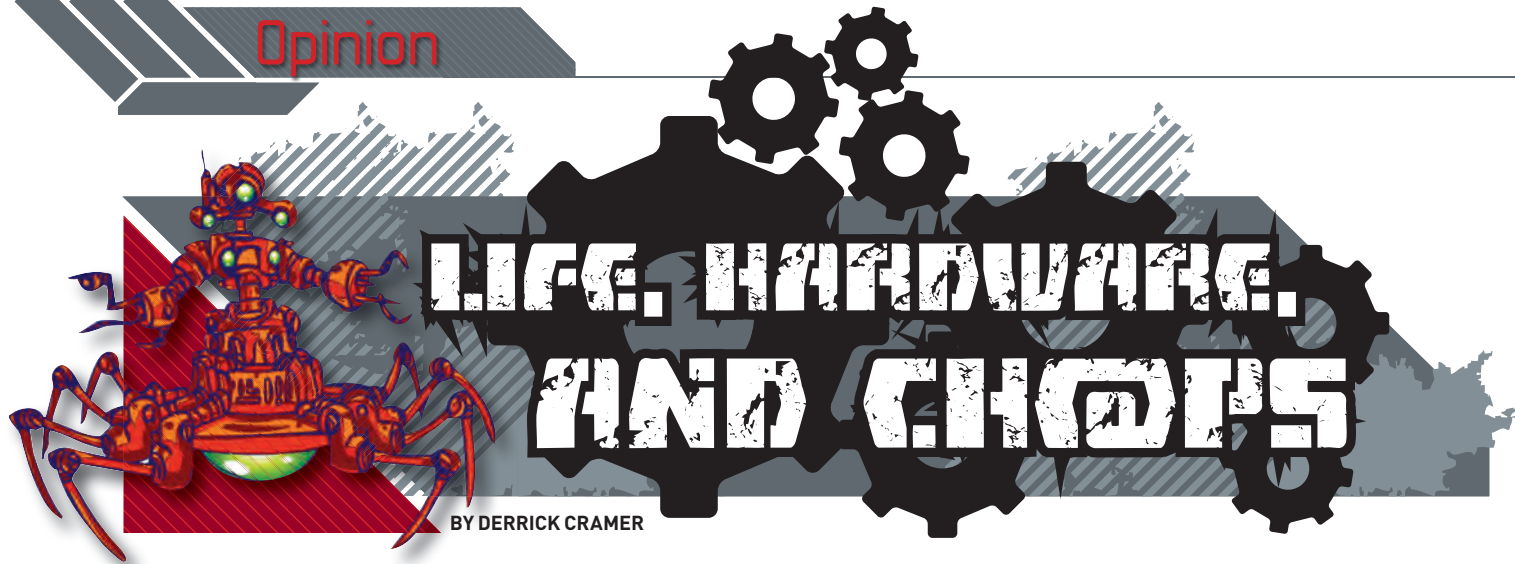
Johannesburg:
Tel: (011) 203 1000
Fax: (011) 203 1345

Cape Town:
Tel: (021) 555 8200
Fax: (021) 555 7136

Durban:
Tel: (031) 582 0200
Fax: (031) 582 0280

Port Elizabeth:
Tel: (041) 398 7082
Fax: (041) 398 7135

Bloemfontein:
Tel: (051) 430 0000
Fax: (051) 430 1144



Media Box vs. HTPC, what's best for you?

WHO DOESN'T WANT TO watch stored media on their home theatre setup? It makes literally no sense whatsoever: you shell out for a 42-inch full HD TV, a high-end receiver and a set of quality 5.1 speakers, and are then stuck watching said stored media on a 22-inch monitor with reduced sound quality coming from your "el cheapo" sub and satellites PC speakers. The solution: an HTPC (home theatre PC) or a media box. But which one to go for?

With each you have pros and cons as you would with any choice between two different products that are designed to do the same job. What we're going to do this month is find out which one suits your needs and your budget. So, without further ado, let's introduce the contenders:

First up, we have the HTPC consisting of:

- A basic media case
- A 300-watt generic PSU
- A P5KPL-AM SE
- An Intel E5200 processor
- 2GB of DDR2 800MHz
- An ATI HD 4350
- An LG GGC-H20L 16x DVD+/-RW + 6x Blu-ray drive
- A 250GB SATA hard drive
- A 1.5TB SATA hard drive
- A Media Center Remote
- Operating system (Windows 7)

Total Cost of HTPC: R6,000

Next up, we have the Mvix MX780HD, a media box with a whole lot of bang for your buck. It provides you with almost everything you would care to use a media PC for in a small package. The total cost of the unit with a 1TB SATA hard drive will be R4,000.

Right, how shall I do this comparison. I'll list important aspects that one would look for when purchasing a product of this type. Then I'll decide who wins each aspect and tell you why.

INPUT/OUTPUT: WINNER - HTPC

As far as input is concerned, the HTPC can support more drives, peripherals and any manner of other things you may want to stick into an HTPC. With regards to output, the PC is once again ahead, thanks to its versatile multiple monitor support. Other than that, both devices can output video via HDMI, S-video, composite video, and RCA.

USER INTERFACE: WINNER - MVIX

There are two options the HTPC has. It can either go for a version of Windows, in which case this will increase costs and feel bloated when considering the machine's use, or it can venture

out into Linux land, in which case the cost is free, but it is far harder to find good media centre software.

FILE SUPPORT: WINNER - HTPC

This is by far the closest point of contention between the two, and the only reasons the HTPC wins are the playback of HD MKV files, and the Blu-ray drive allowing optical media to be viewed at ease. Other than these two points, both support MPEG-1/2/4, AVI, DivX 3-4-5-6, XviD, DVD, ISO, WMV, ASF, TP, TS, TRP, AC3, MP2, MP3, DTS, WMA, OGG, AAC, WAV, PCM and M3U. How's that for jargon.

STORAGE CAPACITY: WINNER - HTPC

Hands down, no contest. While the Mvix can support a maximum of 1TB internally and 4TB externally (2 x 2TB drives via USB) giving it a total of 5TB storage, the PC by contrast can support a maximum of 4TB internally and 8TB externally, giving it a total of 12TB. An unlikely scenario to be sure, but if you use our above spec'd machine compared to the Mvix with a 1TB drive, you'll see it's 1TB compared to 1.7TB.

SIZE AND POWER USAGE: WINNER - MVIX

Being far smaller and using far less power, the Mvix is miles ahead of the HTPC in this category.

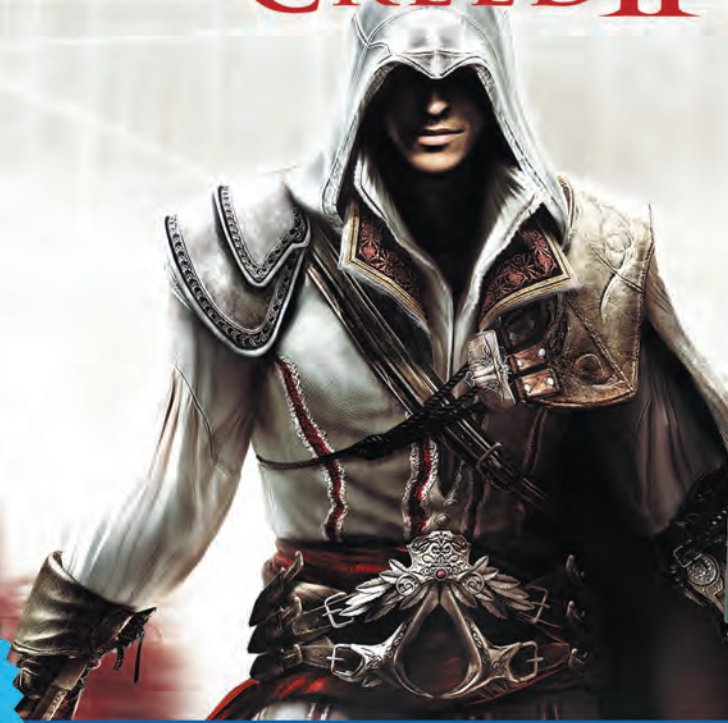
OVERALL: WINNER - HTPC AND MVIX MX780HD

You didn't really expect me to choose a winner, did you? This whole issue boils down to your budget. If you have R4,000 to spend, get the MX780HD. If you can stretch the budget to R6,000, the extra features of the HTPC are worth it. **NAG**

"With each you have pros and cons as you would with any choice between two different products that are designed to do the same job."

gameloft

ASSASSIN'S CREED II



**SMS GLN
to 31116***
SMS is free

**BUY 1 GET 1 FREE AND STAND A CHANCE
TO WIN 1 OF 20 IPOD TOUCH'S!**

**SIMPLY DOWNLOAD ASSASSIN'S CREED II...
or any other Gameloft Game and you could be a winner.**

TOP 3

REAL FOOTBALL
2010



AVATAR



MIAMI NIGHTS 2



NEW

SHERLOCK HOLMES



CRAZY TAXI



EART WORM JIM



CLASSICS

MIDNIGHT POOL 2



BLOCK BREAKER
DELUXE 2



BUBBLE BASH 2



ACTION

ASTERIX



SONIC



GANGSTAR 2



GIRLS

BRAIN CHALLENGE 3



NEW YORK
NIGHTS 2



PARIS HILTON'S
DIAMOND QUEST



SPORTS

PRO GOLF 2010



FERRARI



REAL RUGBY



vodafone live!

Vodafone live! is free to browse. A content fee is payable for content bought. The user is always advised of the content fee payable for content and such user must first accept the cost prior to downloading content. SMS sent to 31116 is free. A WAP - enabled cellphone is required to access Vodafone live! content. Games are handset specific. A 3G cellphone is required to download to download videos, full tracks and mobile TV services. Please refer to the relevant terms and conditions applicable to competitions on Vodafone live!. Access to Vodafone live! is exclusive to Vodacom customers. For more information contact Vodacom Customer care on 111 free from a Vodacom cellphone, or 082 111 from any other phone. © 2009 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. JAMES CAMERON'S AVATAR is a trademark of Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. All rights reserved. Sherlock Holmes licensed by WB™ & © and Frogwares™. Marvel and Spider-Man: TM & © 2009 Marvel Entertainment, Inc. Licensed by Marvel Characters B.V. Sonic and Crazy Taxi © SEGA. Terminator StudioCanal S.A.; Salvation™ © 2009 TAAC. Ferrari Produced under license of Ferrari SpA. FERRARI, Assassin's Creed, Midnight Pool, Block Breaker deluxe, Bubble Bash, Real Football, Real Rugby, Miami Nights, New York Nights, Date or Ditch, Pro Golf © Gameloft. Gameloft and the Gameloft logo are trademarks of Gameloft in the U.S. and/or other countries. All rights reserved.

vodacom
South Africa's Leading Cellular Network

THE SCIENCE OF SPEED: STORAGE

THE PC, AS A unit, rolls through regular cycles. For a few months, its processing power that suddenly evolves, and the supporting systems have to evolve alongside. Then its GPUs, then RAM, and then displays. However, one element invariably, at some point, lags out of sync and needs forceful correction.

It becomes the bane of enthusiasts' lives. The leash on their otherwise seemingly limitless machines. And they push to get beyond it.

THE WEAKEST LINK

At the moment, that component is storage. The latest SATA drives with NCQ and big buffers aren't that much faster, say around twice as fast, than the IDEs that were around for the preceding years. And IDEs weren't even that much quicker than the even older MFMs. Meanwhile, processors have leaped from being counted in mere megahertz, and two-digit megahertz at that, to multiple cores pumping gigahertz clocks, gigahertz buses, and gigahertz RAM – storage has kept up by expanding its capacity, but not its performance.

The obvious, and correct, conclusion is that all of this raw potential is today mostly slowed down by how quickly the data it needs to be useful is read and the results written. To and from permanent storage. Then, because of the power of the computational components, we push more and more detail through our machines, ask them to run multiple programs simultaneously without flinching, even bulk up the OS with some pretty effects

and resource-hogging extras. That slow storage slows all of these functions down.

Fortunately, the IT companies feeding our performance addiction are still enthusiasts themselves. And they seem to have come up with a solution: the solid-state drive (SSD). At its simplest, it's RAM being used as a disk. Non-volatile flash RAM, of course – like you get in a USB stick, which can store data permanently even without power.

But the earliest examples have had some issues. Their performance had certainly been promising, but at first, there were some data reliability issues. Really not unexpected in a newly developed technology, and then people started actually thinking about buying them – until they looked at the cost!

These excuses aren't going to be around forever, though, and already Intel is driving forward, hard, with second-generation X-25 M SSDs. They're offering 160GB for less than the price of 80GB first-gen drives, while offering basically the same performance, if not improved in ways by new firmware controlling the thing. Using MLC-based flash chips rather than the older SLC type is the secret to both the low cost and high performance, and could even get around the well-known lifecycle limitations of SLC-based parts.

Time, then, for us to find out precisely how much an SSD actually helps your PC's gaming and day-to-day performance. When our very own X-25 G2 came in, it quickly got a fresh OS installed and we broke out the old stopwatch.

A RAGING RIVER OF DATA

But maybe some theory and theoretical throughput numbers are in order first. This 160GB drive reads data at an astonishing 280MB/sec, knocking on the theoretical throughput maximum of the SATA interface


itself. It doesn't write quite so fast, although just over 80MB/sec isn't slow either. A regular, plated SATA drive won't get you that unless you RAID it with a very expensive controller (not on-board) and a slew of other fast drives.

Of course, there is a problem with the theory. All of this I/O leans heavily on the processor and supporting subsystems themselves. Very much like when GbE was just being born into the mainstream – at the time, no one actually had processors capable of encapsulating IP traffic that quickly! That's why we invest in dedicated RAID controllers for storage, as well, to offload that workload as much as possible.

Fortunately, just one SSD doesn't overstress a modern quad-core CPU enough for it to be an issue; you'd need at least seven more for that. Besides, it's when you look at latency as well as throughput that you really begin to understand the SSD pitch. While a fast HDD will drop to around 2ms access time, this SSD takes that down to 0.065ms! Anyway, all we really wanted to find out was just how much faster our SSD-powered Windows 7 Ultimate and our favourite crop of games for the moment would load, run, and generally be.

THE NAKED REALITY

We'll start where the machine does: the Windows 7 Ultimate boot time. These results should pretty much set the tone for all of our other tests. Forty-four seconds might seem an awfully long Windows 7 load time, and we were quite surprised too as the installation didn't feel particularly slow or flawed. It felt like booting with all the fury of a charging sloth,



though, after the SSD had its go, and shaved over 30 seconds off for an impressive POST to Windows-welcome tone of 12 seconds.

We're all *Borderlands* mad at the moment, so it was the first of our games to go up against the stopwatch. It's timed from executing the file to the moment of the 2K Games logo scrolling across the screen. We also tried loading a couple of favourite areas, and found Dahl Headlands to be fairly sluggish, so we've compared these load times as well.

The SSD is much faster, there is no doubt, slashing the initial *Borderlands* load time from a lengthy 32 seconds down to 11 dead. That's just over one-third of the time taken by a traditional HDD. That little bit of delay you get, on the mechanical setup, between clicking on the executable and the splash screen coming up, is all but gone. You can get from the main menu into Dahl Headlands in 22 seconds with a regular HDD. But splash out on an SSD, and you'll be there in under 10. Very nice.

Demigod isn't the quickest to load, either, and again we've timed from execution to launch, and then from launch to play time of a fully AI-loaded, 10-player game on the Mandala map. Our SSD installation was breaking no sweat at all, beating out a conventionally attached SATA disk on these sort of sequential read tests especially – in this case, 14 seconds dropped to a barely noticeable 6, while the Mandala level load went from a slightly cumbersome 30 seconds down to 15. In multiplayer games, you'll always be the one waiting for everyone else to load at the beginning of a battle.

NFS Shift can be so sluggish in loading, it's almost frustrating progressing through the levels, and if the SSD could help, it'd be a welcome cherry on top of a very sweet game. And again the X25 M G2 pulled the proverbial rabbit from a hat – only this time, it's even more comprehensive. It took 29 seconds to load into the menu, and then another 29 to load a quick Nürburgring race from there on the spinning platters. The entire process dropped to just 18 seconds from clicking on the icon to being ready to race on the SSD.

AS RESPONSIVE AS A SCALDED MEERKAT

You can notice these differences in every element of the OS as well, even if the more generalised read-and-write workloads of simply running the Windows OS aren't quite as well suited to the blistering throughput of these drives when reading. Still, that miniscule access time is what does the job here, and Intel's utilisation of the NCQ (Native Command Queuing) standard for SATA connections adds the necessary buffering capabilities to the operation of the SSD.

But the SSD system is much more responsive overall – the Start menu opening practically instantly, even the first time when it still has to load its contents from the disc. Opening Outlook even with my enormous PST having to be read is insane. You barely have time to notice the splash screen, while on a regular HDD this can seem to take forever (actually 14 seconds, versus 4 on solid state).

There is one caveat, but it relates more to a dedicated storage controller and drives, like SAS for instance, than to other SATA drives. And that is that the SATA interface is rather CPU-intensive, so if your processor is occupied with a background task, encoding

video, compressing files or the like, the storage starts to sputter a bit, whereas a dedicated controller offloads most of the actual processing needed from the CPU and to the controller itself, freeing up clock cycles for whatever it is you prefer to do with them.

BECOMING REASONABLE, AND EXTREMELY DESIRABLE

And then, of course, there's the price. This 160GB example will set you back around three grand. That's a lot more reasonable than the first-generation of these drives, but is still expensive compared to a disc. For R3K you could get several terabytes of new, disc-based storage.

And reliability? Well, it's still a developing technology and impossible to say with 100% accuracy. Flash has had some longevity problems, but today I'd say it's almost as reliable for storing your critical data as magnetic particles.

Based on these tests, though, it could be three grand really well spent if you spend a lot of time on your machine and waiting for it less is important to you. A lot less. Even if it's just used as your boot and main apps/gaming drive, the results will actually surprise you.

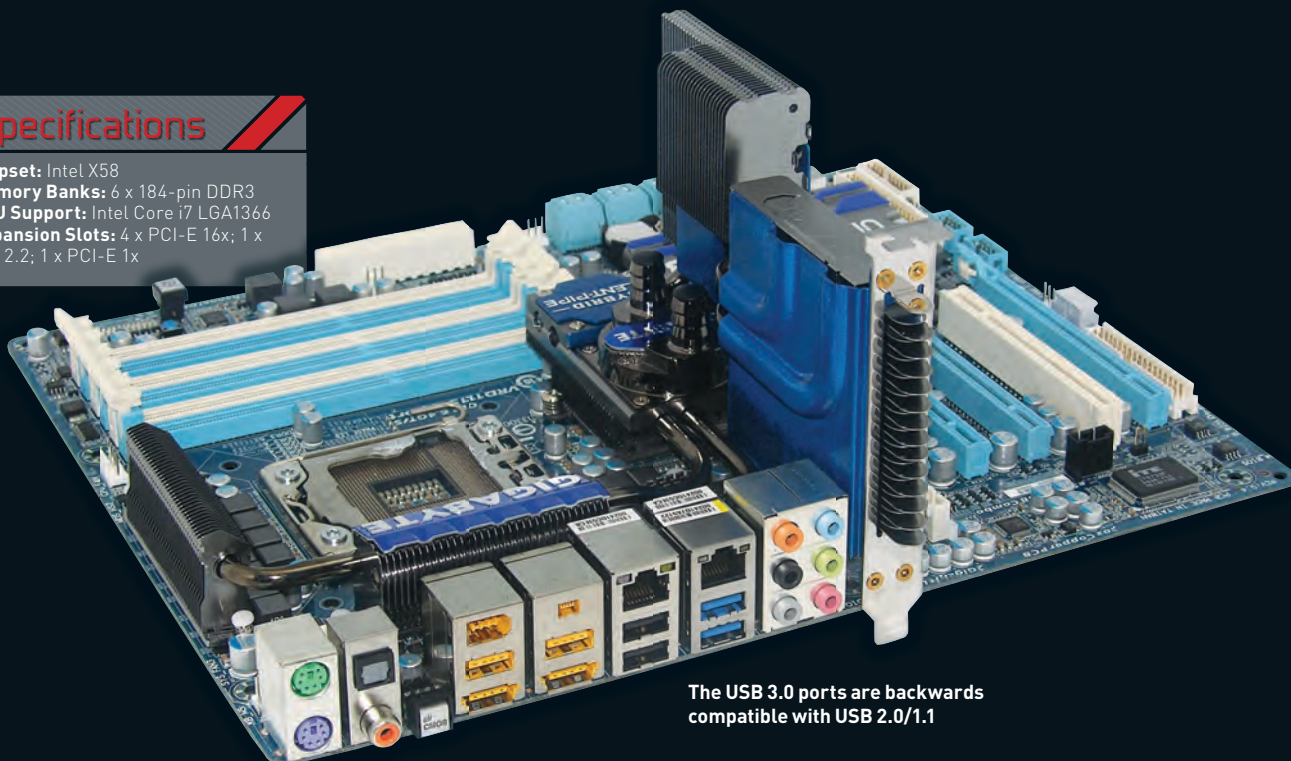
Just continue to stay away from the really cheap SSDs. It won't be long until the decent stuff is available at even more affordable pricing. Don't sour yourself on the technology by buying underdeveloped garbage, which will last but a few months and give you only glimpses of the real performance potential.

NAG

Russell Bennett

Specifications

Chipset: Intel X58
Memory Banks: 6 x 184-pin DDR3
CPU Support: Intel Core i7 LGA1366
Expansion Slots: 4 x PCI-E 16x; 1 x PCI 2.2; 1 x PCI-E 1x



The USB 3.0 ports are backwards compatible with USB 2.0/1.1

GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD7

WHEN THE ORIGINAL GIGABYTE GA-EX58-EXTREME board was released, it was met with great acclaim. It featured everything you would expect a high-end X58-based motherboard to support, but over and above that, it was a fantastic overclocker, thanks to some impressive work from the R&D team at GIGABYTE.

However, as great as the motherboard was, it could not beat the legendary EVGA X58 Classified, which is considered by many as the best X58-based motherboard on the market. This is largely because of the incredible overclocking headroom that this motherboard has when configured just right.

Late last year, though, GIGABYTE introduced a follow-up motherboard to the original GA-EX58-EXTREME in the form of the GA-X58A-UD7. We would have thought this board would be named the "EXTREME 2" as reported by CPU-Z's motherboard tab, but it was given the UD7 label, which places it in an even higher performance bracket than the EXTREME motherboard.

The GA-X58A-UD7 might look very similar to the previous board at first glance, but it is a very different motherboard. This is especially true in performance and the feature set. In fact, the X58A-UD7 packs several features that make it a better motherboard out of the box than the original EXTREME board with the latest BIOS update.

This is not limited to the new 24-phase power design, but extends to the added USB 3.0 and SATA 6Gb/sec support. These are the two key features of the X58A-UD7 board that

most people are likely to notice and obviously be more impressed by. For the most part, everything else remains the same on the motherboard, with the typical POST LED, clear CMOS button, power and reset buttons, 3-Way SLI and CrossFire support, and 8.1 HD audio rounding out the features. GIGABYTE has made another change to the board, though, where the PCI Express slots are concerned.

It is now possible to have 4-Way CrossFire with four individual cards, but this is only in theory. The reason for this is because the slots that one would use to employ 4-Way CrossFire are positioned in a way to make such a configuration virtually impossible without an extender card of sorts.

In fact, this configuration will only be possible with single-slot cards, which means that running four 5870 cards on this motherboard is impossible: a single card will cover two PCI Express slots, only leaving the option of 3-Way CrossFire.

This is not likely to be an issue for many people, but it would have been better if the space issue was dealt with in a better manner, especially considering that the investment had already been made in making the board capable of such a configuration.

Where performance and overclocking headroom are concerned, the X58A-UD7 outpaces the older board in several synthetic tests. In gaming tests, the results are the same, but in 3DMark Vantage and Super PI 8M, the UD7 board posts better numbers. Whether

this is due to the changes in the board physically, the BIOS or both, we are glad to see a manufacturer not only delivering an upgraded motherboard, but one that improves where it counts the most: application performance.

Overclocking the UD7 proved to not only be simpler than on the original EXTREME board, but also yielded significantly better results, with a BCLK reaching 235MHz on an engineering sample Core i7 975XE CPU. This was not only a validation frequency, but it was capable of completing many runs of 3DMark Vantage.

We are still not able to test USB 3.0 and SATA 6Gb/sec performance at present, but we are happy to see that this motherboard is relatively future proof, with two USB 3.0 ports (colour-coded blue) and four SATA 6Gb/sec ports, for a total of eight USB and ten SATA ports.

We can't really fault this motherboard, and it easily takes the place of the EX58-EXTREME as the Dream Machine motherboard of choice. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko



Bottom Line

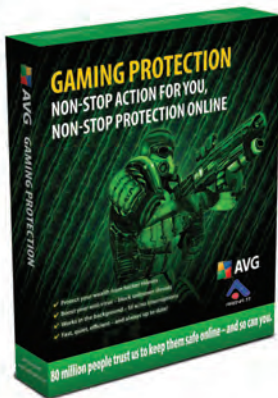
If the GA-EX58-EXTREME failed to impress you, the GA-X58A-UD7 might just do the trick. It's in every conceivable way a better motherboard.

Plus

- + 24-phase power
- + Overclocking ability
- + Performance

Minus

- PCI Express slot placement



WITHOUT COMPROMISING SECURITY.

As an avid gamer, you want nothing to come between you and the game. Not even your security software. AVG, understands which is why we have developed AVG Gaming Protection.

Unlike traditional security software our Gaming Protection does not rely on signature files or monitor port traffic. Instead, it works in the background, monitoring inappropriate inter-application activity. To keep you safe without slowing down your game.

AVG Gaming Protection. Get it and game on.

Available at all leading retailers

AVG now available across Incredible Connection stores in:

• ALBERTON • ATTERBURY • BAYSIDE • BLOEMFONTEIN • BLUE ROUTE • BOKSBURG • CANAL WALK • CAPE GATE • CAPE TOWN CBD • CAVENDISH • CENTURION • CLEARWATER • CRESTA
• EAST LONDON • EAST RAND RETAIL PARK • EASTGATE • EDENVALE • FOURWAYS • GABORONE • GATEWAY • GEORGE • GREENACRES • GREENSTONE • HEMINGWAYS • HIGHVELD
• KEMPTON FESTIVAL MALL • KIMBERLEY • KLERKSDORP • KOLONNADE • MALL @ REDS • MATLOSANA • MENLYN • NELSPRUIT • NORTHGATE • PAARL • PAVILION • PIETERMARITZBURG
• POLOKWANE • PORT ELIZABETH • RICHARDS BAY • ROSEBANK • RUSTENBURG • SANDTON • SOMERSET WEST • SPRINGFIELD • THE GROVE • TYGERVALLEY • V&A WATERFRONT • VAAL
MALL • VEREENIGING • WEST RAND CROSSING • WESTGATE • WINDHOEK • WITBANK • WONDERPARK • WOODMEAD

Specifications

GPU: Cypress Pro
GPU Clock: 725MHz
Process: 40nm
Memory: GDDR5, 1GB
Memory Clock: 1,000MHz
Bus Width: 256-bit
GPU Features: 1,440 SPUs; 72 TAUs; 32 ROPs
Ports: 2 x dual DVI; 1 x HDMI; 1 x DisplayPort



HIS Radeon 5850

AMD/ATI HAS TIMED THE launch of its new 5800-series to perfection, it seems. NVIDIA doesn't look likely to have the 300 series ready until Q1 2010, leaving the company's excellent, but very costly GeForce 200 to see them through until then. Sort of looks a bit like painting a target on their own backs, really. One that AMD has sniped with critical accuracy. We just hope that it sorts out the initial supply problems being reported across the globe in time. If no one can get their hands on products, it'll be the ideal opportunity well and truly squandered. Technically, it looks as though they've got the goods. The range-topping 5870 has taken all the single-GPU records already, and they're mercilessly following up with this, the more sensibly-priced 5850 model – in this case from HIS.

It'll compete directly with the 275s from the NVIDIA stable, at that price-point sweet spot of R2,500 to R3,500. And it's basically a 5870 running lower clocks, and just about 10% of the SIMD units disabled. That translates to, on this HIS reference design, 725MHz for the core, and a round 1,000MHz for the gigabyte of GDDR5 RAM.

To score big it has to outrun the 275 at the very least. In fact, trouncing the 285 – still basically a R5K card – would

really make a statement, and probably force NVIDIA to slash its prices to offload 200-series stock before the 300 changes the world once again. It should help the company's flagging performance at retail outlets nicely too, which, interestingly, even the recession and AMD products' traditional value leadership haven't been at all useful to.

In our tests, this card in fact managed to beat out our results from a 285 in almost every test. It averaged a 10% victory margin, and about a 40% margin over our other reference card – an older 4870, which still runs everything new pretty acceptably. Yet, it's not that much cheaper than a 5850 anymore, although some forward-thinking merchants have already cut these to sub-R1,500.

The newer card brings DX 11 support to the party, as highlighted by the inclusion of a voucher giving you immediate download access to *DiRT 2*, the first commercial game to use the latest DirectX under the hood. But if you want an early preview of the DX 11 action, grab the Unigine Heaven benchmark off last month's cover DVD. That rocky path that looks pretty flat and, well, path-like using a DX 10 card suddenly gains a depth of texture and obvious cragginess that you'd wince with every fall of your prized horse's hoof.

Now imagine that sort of depth on the no-doubt spectacular rally tracks of *DiRT 2*. Should be really good.

Of course, 5850 buyers can be assured of the direction this Cypress GPU family is going to take – basically the same road as the 4850. In half a year these cards will still be good, but not that good, as the 5890 and faster 5870 variants spawn to fend off the 300s coming out of their wraps.

Living in the now, though, it is the "best" GPU performance you can buy today at this price point. It's also, usefully, quite light on power, so even rigs straining at their 550W PSUs' power threshold could run a 5850 with no additional investment.

NAG
Russell Bennett

★★★★★

Bottom Line

The new king of the mid-range. Period.

Plus	Minus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + DX 11 ready + Low power consumption + Immense performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will date fast - No PhysX



Calling all cyberculture junkies!
Stay up-to-date with the hottest new games, previews, reviews and features - anytime, anywhere.

**ACCESS A WORLD OF
PURE GAMING BLISS ON
YOUR MOBILE PHONE**

Get regular updates on your phone
from SA's leading games magazine.
Go to M.NAG.co.za or sms MOBI NAG
to 33978 (R1,50).
Only network data charges apply.

**Visit the NAG wapsite for cutting-edge
gaming, computer and technology news.**

SAMSUNG
FUN Club
<http://za.samsungmobile.com>

 **thumbtribe**
mobile solutions

Psst ! Gaming fanatics, check this out...
For **FREE** games, video and more, go to the Samsung Fun Club
WAP site wap.za.samsungmobile.com or SMS MOBI SFC to 33978
(R1.50)

Specifications

Detachable mic
Cable extender
10 to 28,000Hz frequency response
40-ohm drivers

SteelSeries iron.lady Siberia Full-size Headset

WITH TIME APLENTY ON my hands, I jumped at the chance to review a set of SteelSeries Siberia headphones, having heard only good things about them. Upon collection, one minor detail stood out, though. This is the iron.lady version, and therefore the set has a pastel pink and black colour scheme. Did this affect the quality of the unit? No. Did this make me look a bit too feminine while fragging in *Modern Warfare 2*? Oh yes...

Now that I have that off my chest, I can get down to reviewing this amazing set of cans. First off, features. And boy, oh boy, what a list. The headphones have a 1m-long cord attached to them. While this is a tad short for use with PCs, it is as near to perfect as can be for MP3 players (one target market of the iron.lady). When you get home, simply plug the 3.5mm jack into the bundled 1.8m extension cable (with volume control) and you're ready to game. A really nifty feature seen on the newest headphones, this is let down somewhat by the volume control at the end of the 1.8m extender. Made out of plastic, it feels less than solid. Not flimsy, mind you, but you would be expecting more. However, the cord used for the headphones and extender more than makes up for this, being thicker than the 3.5mm jack and made of hard rubber. A major plus for the LANner that has to transport his gear often, this cord will give you peace of mind. Next up, we have the microphone, which is separate from the headphones. Using a small clip, it can be attached anywhere on your shirt and

works surprisingly well considering how far away it is from your mouth (when compared to a standard boom mic). The 3m mic cable plugs into the main cable extender, making for a very neat setup and all but eliminating cable snag. The last 1.2m is left hanging freely, which makes mic placement a breeze. Lastly, the mic has an on/off switch, which is small but useful.

Right, after that exhaustive list, let's move onto the real deciding factor for anyone buying headphones: audio quality. Since this device is aimed at gaming as well as music, each will be tested separately. Both gaming and music were tested on a passively cooled HTPC using an ASUS Xonar D2. This was hooked up to an external amplifier, which the headphones were connected to.

Unfortunately, the iron.lady falls short by audiophile standards. The bass sounds a bit tinny and far away, while the overall sound is slightly detached. Using an ABX comparison between FLAC files and 192KB MP3 files, the iron.lady managed a score of 1/10. What this means is that one time out of 10 you can hear the difference between the uncompressed and compressed audio files. A set of similarly priced Sennheiser HD415s managed a score of 8/10. While this is all doom and gloom, fret not: the iron.lady is far from bad for music and does better than many cheaper headphones out there. Only audiophile headphones will give you better sound quality.

The iron.lady was at home doing what

the set was designed for: gaming. And boy, oh boy, did the headphones shine. Using them in *Modern Warfare 2*, you get an immediate sense of good soundstage, meaning you can hear exactly where your opponents are. Often you'll walk around a corner, spraying bullets, confident that you will hit something because the iron.lady told you so.

A really first-class experience, the SteelSeries iron.lady Siberia headset will enhance your gaming experience by adding a new dimension to your games. They are also good for the occasional song or two between matches.

NAG
Derrick Cramer



Bottom Line

Amazing headphones for gaming – worth every cent.

Plus

- + Comfort
- + Cable extender
- + Gaming sound quality

Minus

- Music quality falls a bit short



instant access
on certain products

NEW YEAR,
NEW DECADE,
NEW WEBSITE
www.imaginet.co.za

3G
ADSL
DIAL UP
HOSTING & DOMAINS

086 111 1101 info@imaginet.co.za

imaginet
we'll get you the internet

GIGABYTE GA-H55M-UD2H

FOR YEARS, INTEL HAS produced variants of their mainstream chipsets that supported integrated graphics processors. In some cases, the mainstream chipsets, like the P45, had their integrated graphics circuitry disabled to differentiate it from the graphics-supporting counterpart such as the G41.

With the advent of the DMI/QPI communications system in the latest Core i5/i7 CPUs, the traditional method of employing graphics on such chipsets is finally laid to rest. While the H55 still carries a different name to the P55 chipset, it's by and large the same chipset - or platform, if you prefer.

The H55 platform is different, however, in that all boards based on the chipset have a DVI, D-sub, HDMI and or a DisplayPort for video output. The GIGABYTE GA-H55M-UD2H happens to have all these video-out ports, and as such, has the full features list of the H55. Unlike the older chipsets, however, to make use of any of these ports, you will need the new 32nm Core i3 CPUs. Without a CPU with integrated graphics capabilities, you will be forced to use a discreet graphics card and subsequently will lose the benefit of the

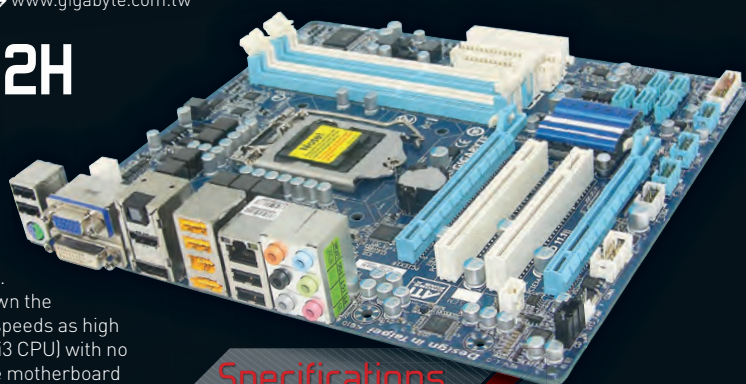
connectivity options.

As it stands, the GIGABYTE board is performing really well, despite it being a low-end, HTPC-orientated motherboard. Online results have shown the motherboard reaching speeds as high as 250MHz BCLK (Core i3 CPU) with no additional cooling on the motherboard besides the reference cooler.

The GA-H55M-UD2H lacks USB 3.0 and SATA 6Gb/sec capability, but even now in 2010, such devices are far and few in between; and given the price point of this motherboard, it would be counterproductive to have such functionality. Being a microATX board, there isn't a lot of space, but GIGABYTE has managed to pack five SATA 3Gb/sec ports and two full-size PCI Express slots for CrossFire graphics and an additional two PCI slots.

This is the first H55 board we had for review, but from the looks of it, it has set quite a high standard for others to follow. And based on these early impressions, the GA-H55M-UD2H looks to be the H55 board to beat. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko



Specifications

Chipset: Intel H55
Memory Banks: 4 x 184-pin DDR3
CPU Support: Intel Core i3, i5, i7 LGA1156
Expansion Slots: 2 x PCI-E 16x; 2 x PCI 2.2



Bottom Line

A fine example of what the H55 chipset is capable of. The motherboard is capable of powering a mid-range machine.

Plus

+ DDR3 1,666MHz support
 + CrossFireX support

Minus

- No clear CMOS button
 - SATA port placement

RRP→ R1,875 Supplier→ Drive Control Corporation Web→ www.philips.com

Philips 244E LCD Monitor

LCD MONITORS HAVE COME down in price considerably, and in 2010, prices look to get even better. With that, however, the quality has improved, and quality that would have cost you several thousands rands in 2007 or 2008 will cost you half now (in 2010).

Nowhere is this more apparent than with the Philips 244E LCD monitor. If you will, consider it the best of what a mid-range monitor can provide today. It's a full 16:9 1080p monitor, which is the norm these days, as manufacturers are making fewer 16:10 1,920 x 1,200 monitors. And understandably so, as that isn't a real HD standard and results in black bars above and below most videos formatted for widescreen viewing.

Technically, the 244E is a little better than most. It has an acceptable 5ms response time, a 25,000:1 contrast ratio, and where connectivity is concerned, it covers all the bases with HDMI, DVI and VGA D-sub ports. Sadly, though, there is no HDCP support over the digital interfaces, which is not a major issue for most users, but it would have been greatly appreciated. Picture quality is above average and the image is vibrant but not harsh on the eyes, seemingly more suited to gaming and video rather than text. Do not, however, take that to

mean that it is substandard when dealing with fine text and such. In fact, it does well enough in that department, but stands out from the competition a bit more in the two abovementioned scenarios.

Where aesthetics are concerned, the monitor is nothing special, sporting a relatively thick glossy black frame around the screen. It features a built-in power supply, so there's no need for an external power brick, which is great for eliminating cable clutter, but results in a rather bulky LCD.

Overall, the 244E is a more than capable LCD and one worth considering if you are in the market for a 24-inch LCD. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko



Specifications

Size: 24 inches
Native Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080
Refresh Rate: 60Hz (5ms)
Inputs: DVI, HDMI, D-sub
Backlight Technology: Fluorescent



Bottom Line

The 244E is a good monitor, and has slightly above-average picture quality.

Plus

+ Good OSD
 + Supports 4:3 mode

Minus

- No 1,920 x 1,200 support



www.junkmail.co.za



NO SUBSCRIPTION REQUIRED



www.junkmail.co.za

100% FREE to Traders and Private Sellers

1000's

of Gaming and Hardware Ads

LIVE

LIVE

LIVE

BUY SELL SWOP IN MINUTES

Do it **ONLINE**
IT's FREE

**70 000
Unique
Visitors
PER DAY**



www.junkmail.co.za

Razer Naga

NICHE PRODUCTS TREAD A very fine line in this world. If they are good, they sell very well. However, if they have one or two minor problems, they will fail - badly, I might add. So, with this in mind, let's see if the Naga can hold its own.

Aimed at the MMO player exclusively, the Naga has 12 main selling points, all of which reside on the left side of the mouse. With 12 thumb buttons at your disposal, custom key combinations are within easy reach of the player's thumb at all times. Well, that's the idea at any rate. Besides the obvious selling point, the Naga features a switch under the mouse that can set the buttons on the side of the mouse to use either the numbers at the top of the keyboard or the num pad, two standard thumb buttons, an "ergonomic design" fit for long gaming sessions, a sensitivity rating of 5,600dpi, and up to 50g acceleration.

It all sounds good so far. So, how can it go so terribly wrong? Let's start with the 12 thumb buttons. They were no problem for me. I'm double jointed and can remove my thumb from its socket altogether. If you can't do this (which would include every friend I had trying

Specifications
5,600dpi 50G acceleration 12 MMO thumb keys

the mouse), then there is no way you could possibly make use of more than 6 without your hand cramping up within half an hour. The "ergonomic design" is wonderful... if you're 1.5m and have very tiny hands. If your hands are on the big side, this mouse is not for you at all. Palm and finger gamers alike will suffer.

With a list including impressive features that don't work, and run-of-the-mill features that don't stand out, the Razer Naga is a mouse built for small people with double-jointed thumbs. If this is not you, look elsewhere - you will regret this purchase. **NAG**

Derrick Cramer



Bottom Line A good idea taken too far	
Plus + 5,600dpi	Minus - All the new "features"

Vantec NexStar Hard Drive Dock

HARD DRIVE DOCKS SEEM to be all the rage nowadays, providing a quick way to transfer files from multiple drives to a computer in a short period of time. With this in mind, we have the Vantec NexStar Hard Drive Dock for review, the latest in the highly acclaimed NexStar line. Does it live up to its name? Let's find out.

The feature list is what you would expect from a device like this: support for both 2.5-inch and 3.5-inch drives, connection to a PC via USB or eSATA, a bundle consisting of every cable you'd ever need - Vantec has covered every base. So why buy the NexStar drive dock instead of the cheaper alternatives?

Well, first off, the build quality is what you would expect from Vantec - superb. Everything feels solid, with no rattles or squeaks, even with a high-speed 3.5-inch drive installed. Secondly, the NexStar design is simple and effective, taking up little space, providing ease of use and most importantly, keeping your drive safe.

Performance results were on par with the best mobile drives out there. When using the USB connection, the

Specifications
Drive support: 2.5- and 3.5-inch Connection: USB 2.0 and eSATA

device managed a low transfer rate of 29.5MB/sec, a maximum of 33.6MB/sec, and an average of 32.1MB/sec. However, the USB connection is only provided to increase compatibility with as many computers as possible, and if you want performance out of the unit, you will need to make use of eSATA. With this connection, we recorded a low transfer rate of 36.2MB/sec, a maximum of 78.3MB/sec, and an average of 61.4MB/sec.

With a market full of hard drive docks you'd think it would be hard choosing the right device, but you would be wrong: the Vantec NexStar Hard Drive Dock stands out from the rest. A device that is good in all aspects, the Vantec NexStar Hard Drive Dock comes highly recommended. **NAG**

Derrick Cramer



Bottom Line The device to get if you're in the market for a hard drive dock	
Plus + Simple + Easy to use + Build quality	Minus - A tad pricey

ROCCAT Kova Gaming Mouse

THERE ISN'T A SHORTAGE of mice on the market, from basic three-button solutions to over-engineered mice featuring up to 17 buttons. For most people, in particular those who play PC games, a mouse with at least five buttons is not only preferred but a necessity.

With that said, the ROCCAT Kova is one of the best-looking mice on the market. The design is simple and sleek, but it looks elegant; and with the constant switching of the lights, it really stands out. More than the great looks, however, it is how the mouse feels that is truly impressive. The feet glide across most surfaces easily, and the lightweight 90g design makes it very comfortable and it can be used for hours on end with no strain at all.

The only downside to the mouse is that the palm rest is a little shallow; and as such, if you have slightly bigger hands, the base of your palm will drag on the desk, which can be quite irritating.

If, however, you can overlook that, the Kova is probably everything you could need from a mouse. While the mouse doesn't have any drivers, it is still programmable using button combinations. This not only allows you to store macros and change the light

Specifications

Buttons: 7
Handedness: Ambidextrous
Interface: USB
Sensitivity: 3,200dpi

sequence on the mouse, but also allows you to select sensitivity on the fly. This is great for those who do not like taskbar programs that are usually present when using some other gaming mice. Best of all, it means your configuration for whatever game or title is always present, regardless of which computer you are using.

This mouse will not be for everyone, in particular because of the low profile of the mouse, but for those left-handed people out there who find themselves forced to use right-handed mice or generic office-type mice, the Kova is definitely for you. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko



Bottom Line

The Kova is amongst the best ambidextrous mice on the market and definitely worth taking a look at, particularly if you're a lefty.

Plus

+ Sensitivity
+ Driver free
+ Looks

Minus

- None

RRP→ R649 Supplier→ Verbatim Web→ www.verbatim.com

Verbatim 5.1 Channel Gaming Headset

IF YOU THINK "VERBATIM," what comes to mind? Storage, right? For me, it evokes a heritage of storage solutions dating right back to the days of floppy drives, and nowadays including flash drives. So, when I saw this package, I saw the headphones first, and thought nothing of it. But when I looked at the brand, I was somewhat surprised. And, at first glance, quite impressed, too. For what had caught my eye was the fact that these headphones feature a very robust metal frame, something that is all too uncommon these days, with manufacturers preferring to render their products from plastic. For a gamer, robustness is virtually a must have, especially if you travel to LANs, and therefore pack your peripherals into bags.

I was so caught up in being pleased with this unit's toughness, that I didn't notice something else – until I tried them on. Here is where a major oversight becomes apparent. Take a look at the picture and see whether you can figure it out. That's right, the ear cups don't articulate in any direction – they are fixed rigidly to the metal frame. This means that, unless your head is of a particular size and shape, these 'phones are going to fit in a rather "medieval" fashion – picture a head vice,

Specifications

Max. Power Output: Subwoofer: 500mW; Centre, front, rear: 50mW
Frequency Response: Subwoofer: 50Hz-50kHz; Centre, front, rear: 120Hz-20kHz

if you will. Remember, the frame is very sturdy, and this strength translates into pressure onto the sides of your head. Nevertheless, despite the uneven fit (tight at the front, loose enough to leave a gap at the back), I sat down to some gaming.

Here, I was back to being impressed. The sound quality was very good, and the surround-sound positioning was convincing enough that I could tell what direction I was being shot from, and the like. Unlike the overall "superstructure," the microphone is on a suitably flexible boom, and can be positioned however best suits the user. Something else I really enjoyed is the fact that these 'phones connect via USB (they require a driver, which is provided), so there is no fiddling with several jacks at the back of the PC. **NAG**

Alex Jelagin



Bottom Line

Here is a solid and good-sounding product. Unfortunately, it is marred by its lack of comfort.

Plus

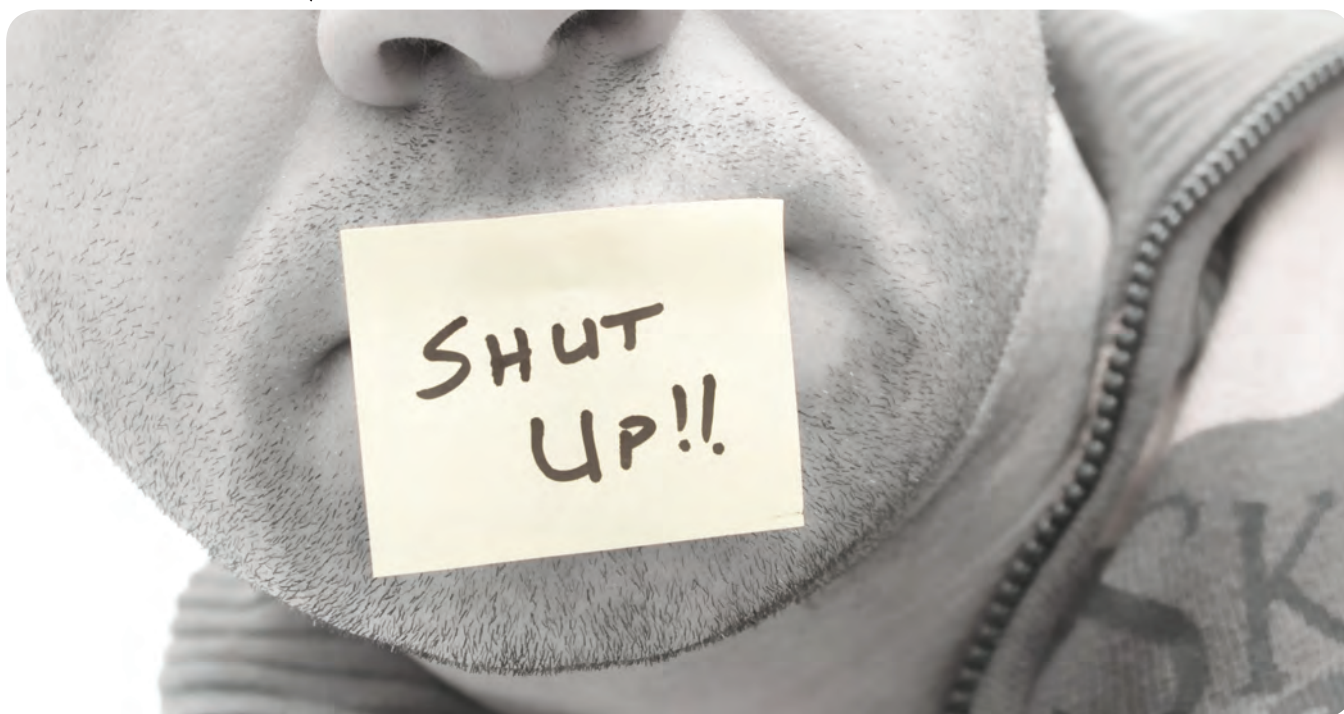
+ Good sound
+ Sturdy

Minus

- Very uncomfortable fit



BY TARRYN VAN DER BYL



Nobody likes you, guy

FANS OF THE ROCK band Tool are some of the most annoying people on the planet. For all intents and purposes, claim fans, Tool invented music. Your favourite band plays a song in 5/8 timing? Tool did that first. Your favourite band plays with a Silverburst Gibson Les Paul Custom in a dropped tuning? Tool did that first. Your favourite band plays anything at all, whatsoever? Oh, Maynard James Keenan was doing that out on a giant slab of migrant, pterodactyl guano-spattered rock as the Paleozoic shoved and bullied its way into the Mesozoic about 65 million years ago already. It's a smug, supercilious elitism of the worst sort, and all the more exasperating for its assumption that anyone who disagrees is obviously some kind of unsophisticated, dribble-jawed troglodyte who likes to smash stuff together and make nice noises.

Unfortunately, it's a smug, supercilious elitism that's not confined to the zany alternate reality of Tool fans either. In gaming, it's the guys who've forgotten how to smile because they're too busy getting serious with some obscure Japanese import you've never heard of (and would never have heard of anyway, obviously, because you just don't **get** it, man). You know, those guys who truculently condemn mainstream juggernauts like *Modern Warfare 2* because they're, well, mainstream juggernauts. The same guys who haven't played anything since *Enemy Territory* because it's all just a rotting heap of derivative rubbish that

hasn't innovated in a decade. Or the guys who jeer off moral panic propaganda about FPSes being "murder simulators," but then denounce people playing *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* as "wannabe guitarists." And the guys who slag off console gaming because it's "casual," and because that actually means something, apparently. It's anyone declaring some equivocal, unequivocal authority, and presuming to dictate exactly what fun is, and who's allowed to have any.

It's all about feeling special, really, and what do people need to feel so special for, anyway? I mean, you've already got your own totally unique DNA code*, so the "But I wanna be special" argument is just greed masquerading as self-involved, fatuous bigotry. I'm not sure which is worse, of course, but it's like choosing between vomit and diarrhoea. It's all the same gross, chunky bits in different packaging.

Don't be that guy. Nobody likes that guy. Of course, that doesn't much matter anyway, since not being liked kind of works out in that guy's persecuted exile context – but whatever. That guy's still a retard. Just shut up and play games.

Also, Tool is so overrated. **NAG**

* Unless you have an identical twin, that is. Interestingly, perhaps, I have an identical twin. Maybe that's why I'm such an asshole.

eu.playstation.com
heavyrain.com



HEAVY RAIN™



**YOUR SMALLEST DECISIONS
CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING**



PS3™

PlayStation 3



SONY
make.believe

GIGABYTE™



Fast Easy Powerful

GIGABYTE P55 Motherboards Accelerated Edition

Simply Fast



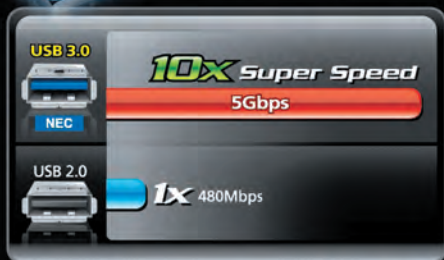
USB 3.0
10x Super Speed



USB Power 3X



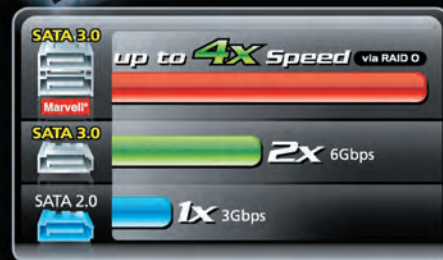
SATA 3.0
4x Speed via RAID 0



World's first USB 3.0 logo certified solution from NEC



Utmost compatibility with 3x USB power boost



World's First SATA Revision 3.0 solution provider from Marvell®



GA-P55A-UD4 / UD4P



GA-P55A-UDR3 / UD3



2x
Copper PCB

rectron
Upgrade Your Life™

For more information please visit www.rectron.co.za or call 0860 582 835 / For Support call our National Technical Support Line: 0861 788 789

Johannesburg:
Tel: (011) 203 1000
Fax: (011) 203 1345

Cape Town:
Tel: (021) 555 8200
Fax: (021) 555 7136

Durban:
Tel: (031) 582 0200
Fax: (031) 582 0280

Port Elizabeth:
Tel: (041) 398 7082
Fax: (041) 398 7135

Bloemfontein:
Tel: (051) 430 0000
Fax: (051) 430 1144